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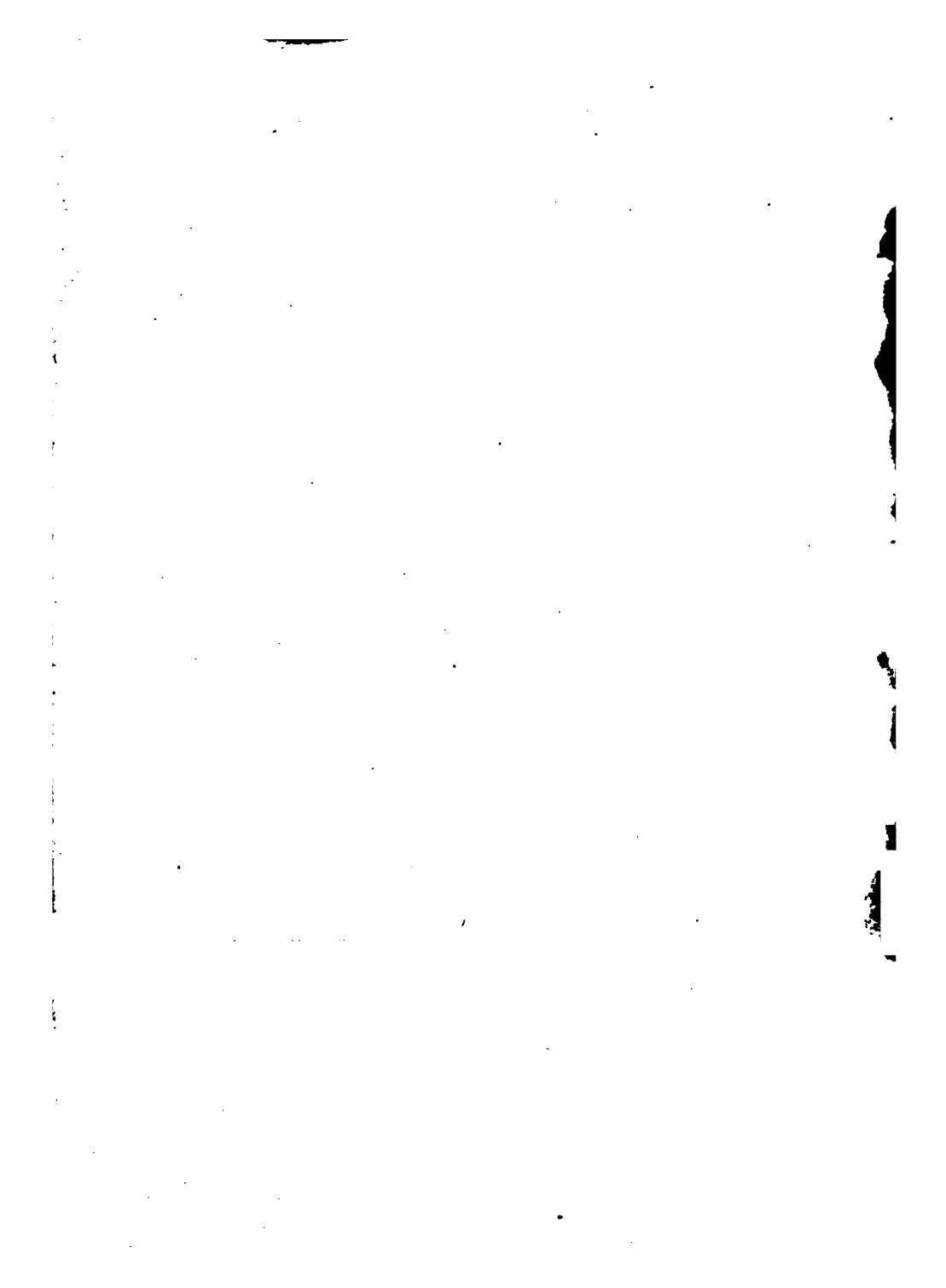
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"'T WAS AN ACCIDENT—YOU KNOW IT WAS,' SHE SAID BREATHLESSLY."

Krause, Lyda Farrington

Molly

By

Barbara Yechton pseud.

Author of

"Ingleside," "We Ten," "Derick," Etc., Etc.

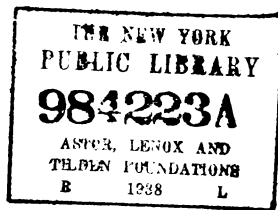


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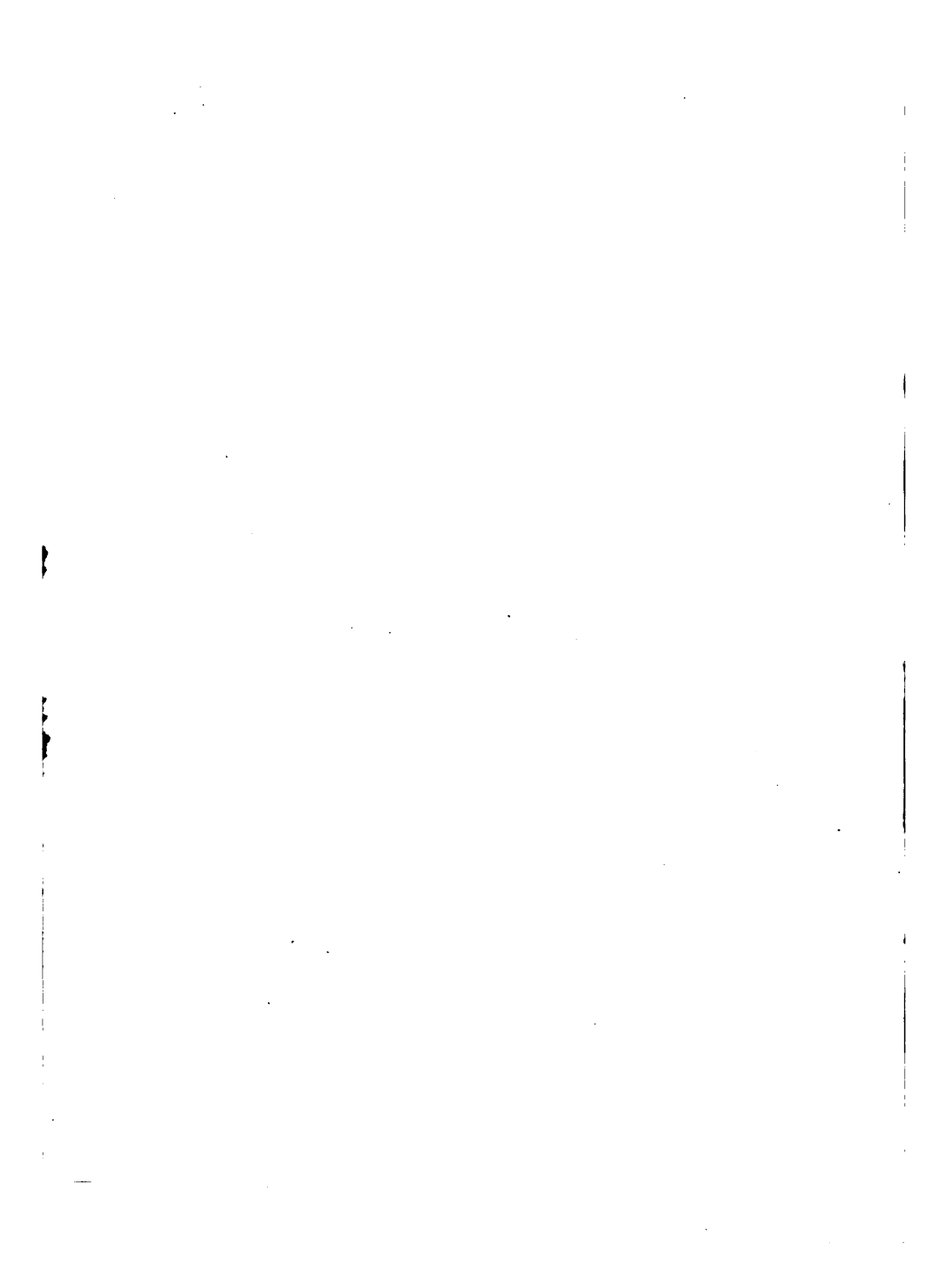
MY LITTLE FRIEND

Katharine Farquhar Davis

WQR 19 FEB '36

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. IN THE SCHOOL-ROOM	1
II. GARRY	21
III. SUNDRY DOINGS	41
IV. THE MYSTERY OF TIFFT ISLAND . .	63
V. RELATING TO A PICNIC	88



MOLLY.



CHAPTER I.

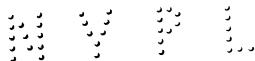
IN THE SCHOOL-ROOM.

BALANCING herself carefully on the sill of the school-room window, Molly leaned out as far as she dared, and watched the game of tennis which Elsa, Rufus, Leaycraft, and Evelyn were playing. Molly was the champion player of the family, and it moved her to wrath to have to stand there and see Evvie's random shots when her own capable fingers were fairly aching to get hold of a racquet.

"I'd just like to go down and show them a thing or two," she remarked.

But, alas! that was what she could not do, for Molly was shut up in the school-room, — in disgrace. There was to be no tennis for her this afternoon, no outdoor recreation until she had perfect lessons to offer Miss Gilmore, her long-suffering governess.

Now, Molly could run, walk, climb trees, swim, row, and play tennis and golf as inde-



fatigably and well as any of her brothers, except perhaps Ned, who was in college, and a member of the 'Varsity team, but when it came to lessons — there Molly was a failure.

"The only stupid Carrington," Miss Gilmore would say mournfully.

"Chief of the dunderheads," Leaycraft would gravely supplement, which last always made Molly very angry.

Carried away by her interest in the game Molly stuck her head still farther through the window, then bethought herself of the tease Leay was and hastily drew back. Let him but catch a glimpse of her, and he'd be sure to roar out something about "Sister Anne, up in the watch-tower," or ask if she were waiting for a gallant knight to come set her free; or, perhaps, he would pretend to be a troubadour and begin to "serenade" her. She knew what to expect, for unfortunately these, to quote Leay, "incarcerations" of Molly in the school-room were of such frequent occurrence that the brothers and sisters had come to regard them as rather a joke. To the girl herself, however, the solitary afternoons, though forgotten as soon as over, were, while they lasted, harrowing times. There were so many things in life to enjoy — jolly things — that care or dulness never stayed long with Molly, and tears were rare; in fact, she publicly

and distinctly prided herself on not being a "cry-baby." Yet unknown to the family, many a bitter tear was shed during these solitary hours in the school-room. Tears were not far from the girl's eyes now as she turned from the window, with an impatient toss of the head, and threw herself into a chair.

"You hateful old things!" she cried, addressing the books that stood in a small, uneven pile on the table before her. "I don't see what school books were ever made for, except to worry and torment people. I suppose I'll be here all night if I don't begin."

With a prodigious sigh she jerked the top book from the pile, and opening it with a bang began studying.

Over and over the German exercise went Molly; covering the page with one hand, she repeated the words aloud in a monotonous sing-song tone, beating time with the other hand. But the dreamy expression that very soon crept into the blue eyes showed that Molly's mind was far away, and when, after a good while of this performance, she turned the book down and tried to recite the entire lesson from memory, a few broken sentences, a word here and there, were all she could recall.

A bright color flew into Molly's face; she brought her plump little fist down upon the

table with a thump. "I am the stupidest—the very stupidest—girl in the wide world!" she cried out, in angry despair. "I don't see why, of the whole nine of us, *I* should be the one to have the least brains!" And down her cheeks sped two big tears, rolling fast and falling splash! right on the cover of the German book. It was just then that Molly heard a rush of footsteps up the stairs.

"Goodness me!" she exclaimed, starting up and hastily brushing the tears off her cheeks, "there come the boys!"

In her flurry her elbow jostled the pile of books that for some time past had barely held their equilibrium, and over they went to the floor. When a few seconds later half a dozen boys and girls and a dog fell into the room in a pell-mell, heiter-skelter fashion, they found fourteen-year-old Miss Molly under the school-room table, gathering up the scattered volumes with an air of calm unconcern that was very far from tears.

Foremost of the newcomers came Elsa, who was seventeen (and considered herself the young lady of the house), and Rufus, a slender, long-legged youth, one year her junior. All the dignity upon which Elsa usually prided herself was gone, and she and Rufus dashed headlong, neck and neck, across the floor, in pursuit of the

same object, — a volume of “Arthurian Legends” which lay on a table at the farther end of the room, — each eager to be the first to seize it. Close upon their heels followed Leaycraft, who was older than Molly, and Evelyn and Viva, who were younger, the rear being brought up by Marty, and a big Irish setter. Marty was barely four, and his short, plump legs were quite unequal to the speed of his big brothers and sisters; but not for the world would he have been left out of the procession. Nor would Dan, his four-footed companion, have been willing to stay out — walking into the school-room as he did, with his plummy tail waving, and on his lips as distinct a smile as canine limitations could attain.

At sight of Molly there was a general outburst from the brothers and sisters, and snatching up Miss Gilmore’s spectacles from where they lay on the top of the piano, Leaycraft set them astride his nose, then bent down, and regarded Molly with an expression of deep interest.

“I see,” he observed, wagging his head mournfully, “brought so low by despair, *and* German, that you ’re grovelling in the dust. Alas! Hullo, there! Ca-re-fully, my love! Don’t get excited!” as he spoke dodging to escape the algebra which Molly sent whizzing in his direction.

It flew over his head and hit Elsa at a most inopportune moment — when, almost with the book in her grasp, Rufus's hand had reached over her shoulder and carried off the coveted Legends. Between the two Elsa's temper was ruffled.

"I wish you would n't be so rough, Molly!" she cried sharply, rubbing her shoulder. "Get up from the floor — you'll ruin those books, throwing them about. I should think you'd feel ashamed to be kept in here day after day to make up imperfect lessons."

"But you have 'em all learned now, have n't you?" asked Evelyn, with kindly interest. "Can't you come out now and have a game of tennis? I'll play with you, Molly; I'm not a bit tired."

Molly got on her feet and threw her armful of books on the table. "I don't know two lines of my German yet — correctly," she remarked, with the calmness of despair. "I have n't touched my French composition — there are about a million mistakes in it — more or less. I did n't have a single date right in my history; and as for that problem — I don't think I'll ever get that through my brain, if I stay in here till midnight."

"Why, that is n't a hard problem," began Evvie. "You do it by" —

"Well, if I can't read I might as well practise," declared Elsa, opening the piano. "I'm to play my new piece for papa to-night; and Miss Gilmore thinks I'm rather weak in one part of it. I'm sorry if the noise bothers you, Molly, but, you know, you've had the school-room to yourself all the afternoon; and it isn't my fault if you've wasted the time mooning over your lessons." Taking a seat at the piano she began the sonata with a firm hand.

Shutting her book with a bang as the noisy music filled the room, Molly threw herself back in her chair. "I might's well give up trying to get these lessons, and just take the punishment," she remarked with a great pretence of indifference. "I guess I could live through three or four days without any outdoor fun—but Miss Gilmore will be sure to think I did it on purpose!"

A murmur of sympathy arose from Evelyn and Viva; and without lifting his eyes from the engrossing "Legends" Rufus called, "Say, Elsa, hold on! I've only a couple more chapters to finish, then you can have this 'Noble and Joyous Historie of Kinge Arthur and of his Noble Knights of the Round Table.' Just let up on the piano in the meantime, won't you?"

To which Elsa, who had become interested in her sonata, paid not the slightest attention.

For some little time Leay had been quiet and very busy in a remote corner of the room, now he lifted up his voice to demand, "Why don't you stir yourself up and do some studying, Molly; just for a change, you know? Why, Miss Gilmore'd fall on your neck for joy!" As he spoke he came swiftly behind his sister, and without her knowledge dexterously attached a cardboard placard to the back of her frock. Then, with a confidential wink to the family and an uplifted finger to enjoin strict caution (ignoring Molly's unconscious, indignant, "Well, I'd like to know if I *don't* study!"), Leay remarked, "*I* know what you're up to, my lady! I see through your little game — you'd like to have your uncle Pete" (this was Leaycraft's childish nickname for himself) "help you hammer those lessons into your brain."

"Oh, Leay! you *dear* boy! Will you really help me with them?" cried Molly, joyously, springing up with the evident intention of embracing her brother; for she knew from past experience that his assistance was worth having.

But Leaycraft skipped out of her reach. "Don't get excited! How often must I tell you that? Now," he stood with one foot forward in an attitude to start, and keeping a wary eye on Molly's movements, "I'll make you an offer: you catch me before I've raced five times

round the school-room table, and I'll see you through the lessons. All right? Then we'll start. One — two — three — and away!"

And away they did go, round the table; Leay ahead and Molly tearing after him, as she went presenting to the eager gaze of brothers and sisters — as Leaycraft had intended she should — the placard on her back, which bore in startling black letters the inscription he had printed upon it — "Mary Elizabeth Carrington, Chief of the Dunderheads!"

All eyes were on the flying figures. Elsa ceased her sonata and swung around on the piano stool to watch them; Evelyn, Viva, and Marty stood gazing, with excited bursts of giggling; and even in the most thrilling account of King Arthur's cruel death wound, Rufus lifted his eyes from his book to watch the race. Over went chairs and smaller articles of furniture as the two continued their mad flight around the table; and when Dan, no longer able to restrain himself, suddenly joined in the race, leaping and frisking on and before them, with deep barks of enjoyment, the din was, as Elsa said, "something terrific!"

It was when Leay stumbled and almost fell over the big dog that Molly stretched out her long arm and clutched her brother — barely a step from the goal!

"I've got you! Hurrah!" she shouted triumphantly, tightening her grip on his collar. "Come on now, right away. We'll begin with the German; it's the worst!"

"Goodness! let a fellow get his breath first," remonstrated Leay, wresting himself good-naturedly away, and dropping into a chair, from whence, chuckling with satisfaction, he viewed his handiwork on Molly's back.

"Tell you! that's a book worth reading!" cried Rufus, slapping the "Arthurian Legends" down on the school-room table. Leay immediately pounced upon the book, regardless of Elsa's indignant protest. "Talk about fighting! Why, 't was just whack! — whack! — whack!" — he made furious imaginary sword thrusts in the air — "and over the other fellows went, like so many nine-pins! The way those old warriors used to smash one another to pieces was a caution! I hardly know," meditatively, "which I'd rather 've been — Arthur, Launcelot, Percivale, Galahad, Tristram, Gareth — they were all such a dandy lot!"

"Give me Launcelot — every time!" declared Leaycraft, his eyes on the "Legends," and still turning a deaf ear to Elsa's urgent demands. "Far's I've gone in the story I think he is worth ten of King Arthur, or that bloodthirsty Gawaine. I'd 've been Launcelot."

"Wish I'd lived in those days instead of now," grumbled Molly, as she gathered her books together. "I'm sure people had ever so much better times then."

"Indeed they did n't — not the girls or women, anyway," corrected Rufus. "You'd have had to stick indoors — up in a tower, most likely — in some dark, damp, horrid old castle, with all the other girls, and spin at a — what d'you call it? — distaff — or else sit working on tapestries — from morning till night — like Elaine."

"I would n't at all," insisted Molly, her nose in the air. "I'd never be like that silly Elaine — pining to death! No," with animation, "I'd have got on a palfrey and gone riding through the woods like Linet and the other demosels that lived then. I'd have met lots of knights and seen them rescuing fair ladies that were in distress. I'd have gone to Camelot and Joyous Gard, and all the other places, and had heaps of adventures." She gave a heavy sigh at thought of all she had lost.

The family laughed in a very incredulous, provoking fashion; and Leay looked up from his book to say, with suspicious warmth, "'T is n't too late even now. By all means go on a tour, Molly. I'll tell you what do: get on a nag (our old pony would do finely; he can hardly toddle) and amble off through

this fair land, in search of," he screwed up one eye at his sister, "in search of gray matter for your brain. That would be a quest worth going on; then I would n't have to help you do the hammering"—

"Do let's begin studying at once," broke in Molly—she was determined not to take offence. "Come on, Leay." Throwing her books upon a small table by the window, she dragged forward a tall screen.

"All's ready," she answered, "oh, come on, do!"

Leaycraft was deeply interested in his book; he frowned, and for a moment looked undecided, then down went the "Legends" on the table. "Oh, I suppose I've got to do it," he said ungraciously, getting up from his chair. "You won't learn your lessons like other people, so somebody's got to pay up for it."

"If that's how you feel you need n't trouble yourself," cried Molly, with great dignity. "I did n't ask you, anyhow, you offered—and besides when a person makes a promise"—She finished abruptly, and turned to go behind the screen.

But Leay suddenly regained his good humor, gazing at Molly with a most benevolent expression. "If you *are* going to be a dunderhead—oh, excuse me! a demosel errant, you need n't

get on your high horse so quickly," he remarked ; which attempt at wit was received by the family with appreciative laughter. "Come, Mary Elizabeth C.," continued Leaycraft, wheeling Molly swiftly around so as to bring the placard on her back under the eyes of the public, "we will retire to private life *and* those lessons. Come!" He took his sister by the tip of one little ear, and Molly, unsuspecting, joining in the general laugh, willingly allowed herself to be led behind the screen.

For a while unusual quiet reigned in the school-room. Elsa was deep in the "Legends," Rufus busy mounting photographs, and Evelyn engrossed in drawing her map. At the farther end of the room Viva and Marty were playing with their dolls, taking their favorites out for an airing in Marty's express wagon drawn by Irish Dan, who enjoyed the fun quite as much as did either of his companions, and transporting refreshments of animal crackers and vials of water to the dolls' house, by way of Marty's train of tin cars. A low steady murmur came from behind the screen, varied occasionally by a remark or two delivered in a high key, such as from Leay, in a tone of exasperated despair, "Well! — for goodness sake! — will you *never* get that through your skull?" or from Molly, with what was intended for withering sarcasm, "Oh, I

know you're the smartest, most wonderful person in the whole world ; but all the same, I'll not stand any bullying from you. Now just remember that ! ”

Barring these little outbursts, which Leay would have told you “did n't count,” peace and good will prevailed. There was, therefore, a general start of surprise when simultaneous with a deep bark from Dan, a lusty outcry from Marty rent the air.

“Molly ! — oh, Molly ! ” howled the little man, “my chou-chou cars is all bwoke ! Dan's bwoke 'em all up — O-o-oh ! ”

Rufus dropped his photographs, Leay's head appeared over the top of the screen, down went Elsa's book, and she, Evelyn, and Viva crowded forward to offer assistance to Marty, who lay flat on the floor with arms outstretched, encircling the scattered remains of his treasured train. A short distance away sat Dan, wagging his tail with energy, mischief in his bright eyes, and on his mouth his own unmistakable doggish smile. He was evidently enjoying the commotion he had created.

Scrambling to his feet, Marty pushed past the other girls and ran to Molly, who at sound of her name had appeared from behind the screen. “Molly, fix my chou-chou cars. Dan's bwoke 'em all to pieces ! Mend 'em yight off,

now," he commanded, holding up the wrecked cars.

At a glance Molly saw it would be a work of time to repair the damage; and as she knelt down and began wiping the tears off her little brother's cheeks, she said coaxingly, "Marty, dear, let Elsa or Evvie mend the cars for you. Molly's awfully busy; she has a lot of great, long, horrid lessons to learn, and must get them done. Will you — like a nice little man?"

"No-o! no-o-o! I 'ants 'ou to do it," insisted Marty, with a roar which the family knew was merely a sample of what he could and would do if his wishes were disregarded.

"Stop your noise this minute, sir!" ordered Rufus, "or I'll make you walk Spanish straight out of the room." To which Marty turned a deaf ear, for he knew the threat would not be carried out.

"You 're the most disagreeable child!" declared Elsa, reseating herself in her chair, with the "Legends."

"Oh, Marty, let me fix it — you don't know how beautifully I'll do it" — pleaded Evelyn.

"I 'ants *Molly* to do it," was all the small tyrant vouchsafed; and with a desperate look at the clock, down sat Molly on the floor and began her task, Marty sitting on his heels

close beside her, to see that she did her work thoroughly.

"What a shame! we could've done it just as well," asserted Evelyn and Viva.

"You're a spoiled monkey!" Rufus informed Marty, throwing a hastily crumpled paper ball at him; which that young person dodged.

"See here, Mary Elizabeth, do you expect me to stay behind here cooling my heels for nothing while you repair steam-engines for that youngster?" demanded Leaycraft, from the top of the screen. "If you're not back here in *five* minutes your uncle Pete leaves for parts unknown, and you and the respected Gilmore can settle accounts as best you may. You all spoil that" —

"Well, then, you'll have to go," broke in Molly, recklessly, "for it'll take me a *good* while to get these fixed; and as long as he insists on my doing it — why, I've got to. Everything is against me this afternoon!"

"You're too good to that chap, you're too soft-hearted with him, and he imposes on you," declared Leaycraft, indignantly. "All right, take your own way, and rush on to three or four days' incarceration — you'll be the victim, not I. As for you, young man," — leaning over the screen with a wink at Rufus, Leay shook a stern forefinger at the small offender, — "as for

you — you 're a paleontological — bicephalous — 'voracious-bagged-at-the-knees' anthropologist! That's what *you* are!"

"You 'll start him roaring," warned Molly, in a rapid aside over her shoulder.

But like Yorick, Marty was "a fellow of infinite jest," he could see and as well perpetrate a joke. Rolling to his feet, he stood with his plump body bent, his hands on his knees, looking at Leay, his head on one side, like a saucy bird; his eyes sparkled, and a broad smile illumed his face. "An' 'ou," he said, wrinkling up his little nose at Leay, one chubby index finger going out — "'ou is a — a — a booley — dooley — dee! A *boo-ley — doo-ley dee!*" A wag of Marty's head added to the emphasis on each word; then throwing his head back the small boy laughed so heartily over his own humor that the whole family broke into a shout of laughter.

In the midst of this hilarity the school-room door went open with a bang, and a thin, much befreckled boy of nine appeared on the threshold. This young gentleman's name was Roy, but on account of his facility for acquiring and dispensing general information in regard to current family events he was familiarly known as the "Spectator," the "Tatler," and the "Carrington Local." He was just now breathing hard

from late exertions, and there was an excitement in his face that immediately secured him an audience.

"Miss Gilmore's — going — away — to-day — *now*," he panted, his eyes big and round as O's. "She's packing her trunk, an' she wants — Ruffie to strap it — for her — Wait — wait, there's more," as a chorus of exclamations arose from the boys and girls. Making a heroic effort after his breath, Roy went on rapidly, "Somebody or nother of hers is awful sick, an' she's got to go right straight off. Silas's putting the horses in to take her to the station for the 4.30 train. That isn't all," waving his hands to silence his audience; he was enjoying the situation. "The new waitress's scalded her hand, an' *she's* goin' off too — same time. An' " —

"I must go help Miss Gilmore," ruthlessly interrupted Elsa, springing up.

"Miss Gilmore — going!" ejaculated Molly, in a tone of awed relief.

"An' Miss Gilmore's been a nawful while in mother's room," went on Roy, ignoring the interruption, save that he raised his voice considerably higher. "She's just goin' to do her packin'. Mother looks cross, too, an' she says Molly's to come down right at once to her." This was said with significance, and called forth an indignant outburst.

"She's complained of you, Molly!" "And going away, too, is n't she the meanest!" "Now you're in for it!" declared several voices, while Leay walked leisurely from behind the screen.

"That settles it," he remarked pleasantly; "your uncle Pete's discharged from his tutorship. Go ahead, Molly, and face the music like a major—you have our sympathy. Before you fly to the fair Gilmore, Elsa, just hand over those "Legends;" I'll care for 'em in your absence!"

"Oh, an' mother's got a telegram, an'"—began Roy, but no one would listen to him.

"Mother wants me, Marty, so you've just *got* to let some one else finish mending the cars," Molly said decidedly, getting up from the floor. And recognizing the force of this remark, Marty accepted the situation like a lamb.

Leay escorted Molly to the door with an air of profound commiseration. "Fare thee well, sorrowing damsel," he cried tragically. "An thou returnest not by eventide, I shall mount my steed and fly to thy rescue. Though lost to sight thou shalt ever be to memory dear"—He paused, as if overcome by emotion, but soon rallied. "Allow me to relieve you—not every one bears a burden with such unconscious grace as you do." Deftly he unhooked the placard from Molly's shoulders, and held it up to her

indignant gaze. "Hands off!" darting aside to avoid his sister's furious onslaught. "You ought to be thankful I didn't let you go downstairs with it on. But some people have no gratitude" —

"I tell you there's more — oh, *won't* you all listen?" broke in Roy, imploringly, then rushed out the balance of his news. "Mother's got a telegram — uncle Archie's coming — to-morrow — an' *Garry*."

"What, that horrid boy!" cried Elsa, sitting down in her surprise, while Rufus gave vent to a long-drawn, "Whew! well, he's a daisy!"

"Ye gods and little fishes!" exclaimed Leay, sliding himself across the school-room table; then gravely, to Roy, "Young man, you've done yourself proud with this Extra. I predict a glorious future for you in the newspaper line. Don't linger, Mary Elizabeth, there's no shirking your fate!"

Molly surveyed him with dignity. "You're the very meanest boy that *ever* lived!" she informed Leaycraft, emphatically. "Just wait till I get back! Just wait — that's all!"

Then the door closed abruptly, and she was gone.

CHAPTER II.

GARRY. ★

"YOU'RE still alive, I see," remarked Leaycraft, as he slid into his chair beside Molly, at the dinner-table. "Mother didn't do her duty by you, and gobble you quite up."

Molly threw back her long wavy hair. "No, indeed! she was just lovely to me. And Miss Gilmore *had n't* complained of me, either," she said rapidly, under her breath. Her eyes were bright, her lips smiling — very unlike the anxious Molly who had left the school-room an hour or two before. "On account of Miss Gilmore being gone, and Hannah, things 'll have to be arranged differently for a while. Until we get another waitress, Nurse is to wait at table as she's doing now," went on Molly, importantly. "And I'm to help her set the table (I did it this afternoon, does n't it look fine?), dust and do such things, you know. And I'm to help her look after the children too."

"You set the table!" cried Leay; "well, that accounts for my having neither salt-cellar nor a spoon for my soup. No reference for *you* when you leave, Miss New-Waitress!"

"No spoon — no salt-cellar!" cried Molly, in great surprise; "why, I put them on — I certainly did. Where can they have gone to? Here, take mine," generously passing both articles over to naughty Leay, who had the missing spoon up his sleeve, and the salt-cellar (salt and all) in his coat pocket.

"You see, it does n't do to be too cocky over one's own performances," he told his sister loftily, with no pricks of conscience. "So you're to take care of the children?" he continued, between mouthfuls of soup. "Teach 'em too, I suppose."

"Mother did propose they should say their lessons to me," answered Molly, ignoring the sarcasm contained in this remark, "but I begged her to let Elsa do that; and I'm to look after the children out of school hours. You and Rufus and I're to recite to mother."

"Oh, we are — eh? I wish mother joy!" Leay grinned, and surreptitiously removed Molly's half demolished crusty slice of bread to the other side of his plate. "I suppose you're to entertain Garry, too?"

"No, sirree!" declared Molly, emphatically. "That's for Rufus and you to do — mother said so. And Elsa is to help her entertain uncle Archie. Why, where's my bread?"

hunting around her plate. "Leay Carrington, you've eaten it!"

"'Evil be to him that evil thinks,'" quoted Leaycraft, with an air of injured innocence which was contradicted by his twinkling eyes. "Do I look like a person that would burglarize a crust of bread?"

"Yes, you do, — and you're swallowing it now," retorted Molly. "But," magnanimously, "you may have it — I don't want it," which, considering the crust was down Leay's throat, was, perforce, a philosophical way of accepting the loss. "Now tell me about Garry," she added; "I'm so sorry I was n't home when he was here five years ago, on his way to Europe. Was he so *very* horrid?"

"He was a disagreeable, overbearing young wretch!" remarked Leaycraft, in a tone calm and dispassionate. "Mother'd worked on our feelings before he came, telling us about Garry's having no mother — being a delicate boy — and all that sort of thing, and we were willing to treat him like a friend and brother, to say nothing of a cousin. Well; he was here three days four hours and thirty-five minutes — and Rufe and I felt that his going then just saved us from a desperate deed. If he'd stayed seven hours and sixty-five minutes longer, somebody's head would've been punched — *hard*!"

'T would n't have been Rufe's, 't would n't 've been your uncle Pete's — maybe you can guess who the sufferer would 've been.

"The way that fellow carried on!" continued Leay, enjoying the interested attention Molly gave him all the more that the topic of Garry's enormities had been worn threadbare in the last five years. "He was impudent to Nurse, until she was ready to swallow him whole! He stove a hole in our boat, he broke our swing, he smashed up our things right and left, and even watered mother's plants with kerosene — and she so kind to him too! The beggar! Oh, he was a daisy! And uncle Archie had no more control over that boy than if he was n't his father! *I* would n't give a continental for a dad like that!" Leay flushed up, casting a look of boyish pride at his own paternal relative's kind yet firm countenance at the head of the table.

"Well, maybe he'll be better now; for mother says Garry's had a dreadful attack of rheumatic fever," observed Molly, proud to impart her piece of news, — "in Rome, I think. So uncle Archie is bringing him here for a change before he and Garry go home to California. Seems odd to have an own cousin — sixteen years old — and for him to 've been here only three days in all his life — does n't it?"

"Just bear up until to-morrow and you'll have all the society of your long-lost cousin that *you* 'll want — and more, too, or I'm a cat!" Leay chuckled.

"Well — Rufus and you are to entertain him," remarked Molly, suggestively. "Mother says so."

"Entertain that" — began Leay, indignantly, when a well-directed bread pill whizzed across the table and hit him on the nose, bringing his remarks to a sudden stop.

It was sent by Rufus, unobserved by the heads of the family, and with a dexterity induced by long practice. "That 's a striking reminder that we 'd like to hear from uncle Pete, on this side of the table," Rufus explained; and the conversation between the brothers and sisters became general.

For all Molly's satisfaction, so gayly expressed to Leay, there had been a serious little talk in "mother's room" that afternoon. It was quite true that Miss Gilmore had not complained of her trying pupil. But a chance remark in the conversation between mother and daughter had obliged Molly to explain that she had spent the afternoon in the school-room, and this had deepened the look of care on Mrs. Carrington's face.

"It's the same old story, Molly," she said, — "the lessons you will not learn! Now, dear,"

as Molly mumbled some excuse, "if you really felt as sorry for these shortcomings as you say you do, and realized how much your inattention and heedlessness annoy and grieve your father and me, it seems to me that you surely *would* turn over a new leaf and do better. I am convinced that carelessness on your part makes the whole trouble."

Molly looked very doleful. "No, mother," she replied mournfully; "it's what Leay says — I have n't enough gray matter in my brain. That's the trouble! I *am* careless — sometimes — and — and heedless, but most times I do try, awfully hard, to get my lessons well. I study and study, with all my might — and when I go to say them to Miss Gilmore — the whole thing flies clean out of my head! Really, mother," Molly's cheeks grew hot, into her eyes came a shamed, appealing expression, "really — I think it's because I'm downright — *stupid* — I have n't any brains! I get mad when the others tell me that — but — but — I do believe it's true." She bit her little red under lip to keep it from quivering.

The smile which Mrs. Carrington had been trying to suppress vanished; pulling Molly's chair closer, she slipped an arm around her daughter's shoulders, and pressed the slim young figure to her. "Nonsense!" she exclaimed

cheerfully. "You 're no more stupid than I am. I 've never known of any stupid Carrington or Leaycraft. Your brothers and sisters are all decidedly above the average in intellect, and quick in their studies. Why should you be the exception? No, 'Mistress Mary,'" rubbing a cheek caressingly against Molly's brown head, "'t is because you 're 'quite contrary,' and won't apply yourself. Now," continued the mother, more seriously, "I sent for you to ask you to do something for me — to help me, in fact. Will you?"

Molly beamed. "Why, mother dear, of *course* I will!" she cried.

With a pat of the hand lying on her lap, and a smile, Mrs. Carrington went on. "As I have already told you, your uncle Archie and Garry will be here to-morrow — both for several weeks, and the latter, it is likely, for all the summer. Nurse will be our waitress until we can get one from town, which may not be for some time (you know they don't like to go so far in the country), and while she does that extra work I want you to look after the children for me. I thought you might teach the younger ones — Evelyn, Roy, and Viva — their lessons, and see to Marty. Elsa can set the table, do the dusting, assist in every way (you know Nurse is n't young), and help me entertain your uncle, and wait upon

Garry — the boys must do their share, too, with Garry. Dividing up this way will make matters easier for me until — what's the matter?" for Molly was blushing a brilliant red, and looking much distressed.

"Oh, mother, — *I* could n't help Evvie in her lessons," Molly cried shamefacedly. "She's ahead of me! I don't think I could even do much for Roy and Viva — in arithmetic. I told you I was stupid!" Then touched to the heart by the disappointment on her mother's face, Molly burst out imploringly, "Oh, but I could do lots of other things, mother, — if you'll let me. Elsa does n't know a thing about setting a table — or about making beds — or dusting — she just hates that sort of work. I love it — and I'd attend to it all, mother, — I know, I could; I've often and often helped our waitresses. And I could look after the children, too; if only Elsa would do their lessons with them. Please let me, mother, — I could do it easily; I love to work about a house!"

"I'd rather have you willing to do the best you could with the thing you did n't like the best," Mrs. Carrington said gravely. "You have a better way with the children than Elsa has; and I thought you might have studied up a little in order to keep ahead of them in the lessons — which would've been a benefit all

round." She sighed, then seeing Molly's downcast face, added kindly, "Well, follow your own plan, my dear; only remember — whatever you do the children will imitate. There must be no madcap performances on your part, Molly, — no rough games or harum-scarum behavior. To be a real help to me, you must be a careful, patient, wise little maid. How is it, daughter? — do you think you can?"

Molly loved to be called "daughter" in just that tone. Straightening up, she tossed back her long loose hair. "Mother, I'll try — I'll try with *all* my might!" she declared, such earnestness in her voice and honest eyes, that the mother caught the rosy little face between her two hands and kissed it warmly.

"I believe you will, dear child!" she said. "And your undertaking this responsibility is a great help to me. I can't imagine what people do who have no daughters! Now come, we must go and see Miss Gilmore off."

Pleased, proud of her responsibility, Molly was eager to begin the new duties. Once only, when she was in bed that night, did the expression of disappointment on her mother's face come back to Molly's mind, and then for a few minutes she felt very uncomfortable. Mother would have preferred her teaching the children — Oh, but the work — the *grind* that would

mean for the teacher — “I couldn’t teach anybody — I simply *could n’t*!” Molly told herself, with a petulant twist of her body, and put the subject out of her mind.

Early the next morning Molly began her new duties with enthusiasm, and with a deftness that astonished Nurse. That Molly had a better way with the children than had Elsa was well known to her, but she knew equally well Molly’s heedlessness and tom-boy proclivities — innumerable torn frocks, spoiled hats, and bruises galore had fixed that knowledge firmly in her mind. It was therefore to Nurse a sort of shock to find that “heedless child” better acquainted with the resident places of the china, glass, and silver, and the modern ways of setting a table than was she herself. It must be confessed that Molly rose in Nurse’s estimation. But the good woman held the belief that praise was hurtful to the young, and when her assistant danced up with the inquiry, “Now, does n’t everything look as nice as if Hannah’d done it?” Nurse felt it her bounden duty to say coolly, “New brooms sweep clean. Let’s see how you keep it up — that’ll prove more’n to-day does,” which was somewhat of a damper on Molly’s self-satisfaction.

There was so much going on that morning that the children were in high glee. Owing to

a pressing business engagement, Mr. Carrington was obliged to go to town at his usual early hour; and Rufus and Leay were deputed to meet the expected guests at the station.

"Now, no skylarking," warned Mr. Carrington, intercepting the wink which was hastily exchanged between the boys. "Remember that you're going as my representative, and that your uncle Archie and Garry have the double claim upon you of kinsmen and guests. I expect you to behave yourselves like gentlemen — you understand that that means like gentle-men," which admonition was received with a grin.

The room that had been Miss Gilmore's was being put in order for Garry's use, being next door to the guest chamber which his father would occupy; and the younger children were galloping about, wild with excitement. Molly had put on a dust cap, and was bargaining with Nurse to be allowed to do the sweeping,—physical exercise was a delight to this girl,—when Mrs. Carrington appeared upon the scene with a still more welcome proposition.

"School is out of the question this morning," she said, smiling. "The youngsters are demoralized; and besides, I want Elsa to do something for me. So you can take the children for a walk through the woods, Molly. Stay out

until noon ; only do be careful, dear, that no one gets into mischief."

Down went broom and dust cap, and off ran Molly and the children to get on coats and hats. It was a May morning such as poets write about, with blue skies, mellow sunshine, tree and shrub in dress of tender green and pink and white bloom, and everywhere under foot, violets, hepaticas, and enterprising dandelions. The joy of living filled Molly and her charges ; they walked, raced, scrambled over hedges and fences, gathered great bunches of new blossoms, and came trooping home with ravenous appetites, more than ready for lunch. But the stable clock showed the time to be a quarter to twelve.

"Mother said we weren't to come in till twelve — suppose we play a game of ball," proposed Molly. "That'll make the time go faster."

The children agreed, but they were tired and hungry, and the tossing was half-hearted. Roy soon deserted for the greater attraction of the stables, and when, in a vigorous throw of Molly's, the ball flew high in the air and shot through an open window into the house, Marty plumped himself on the ground, and lifted up his voice.

"'T was *my* turn ! I 'ants that ball !" he howled.

The situation was critical; Molly felt that something must be done, and that quickly; besides, the strong old wistaria which clung to the columns of the back piazza made the project that had darted into her mind one after her heart. "If I don't get the ball Marty'll make a horrid fuss — and mother wouldn't want *that!*" she thought; then aloud, "Don't cry, Marty, Molly'll climb up quickly and get the ball for you. You stay right here — you and Viva and Evelyn — and watch me go up and come down."

"Perhaps mother wouldn't like you to," suggested sober Evelyn.

Molly eyed her severely. "Is n't it better for me to do this than to have a fuss?" she demanded, with a rapid glance at the only half-mollified Marty to give point to her speech. Throwing off her hat and coat, Molly, with a carefulness that would have impressed Nurse, turned back the skirt of her frock, and began her ascent in search of the missing ball. The room in which it had lodged was one given over to the use of Ned when he was at home, and was unoccupied in his absence. Many a treasure had Molly and Leaycraft hidden in Ned's room during these absences, and always by way of the wistaria vine. So now, Molly went up, hand over hand, with the ease of long practice,

hardly brushing the dainty purple flowers. Up the slender post of the piazza she climbed ; crept cautiously along the tin roof and tumbled herself through the open window of Ned's room. She had calculated the direction the ball would take, and spying it the moment she entered the room, without so much as a glance around she sped across the floor, and clutching the prize rose to retrace her steps. But hardly had she risen when—*whack!*—*whack!* came two sofa cushions on her back.

The unexpectedness of the attack made Molly stagger, the force of it quite upset her temper. Snatching up the cushions, she wheeled upon her assailant.

"You *contemptible* boy, Leay Carrington ! to hit a person in the back !" she declared ; then the arm which had been raised to hurl a cushion dropped by her side, and she stood and stared at the boy who lay at full length on Ned's lounge, regarding her with an air of the coolest indifference.

The blackness of his hair (which stood rampant upon his head) and of his heavy eyebrows ; his sombre big black eyes, and the long white face in which they were set, were all very unlike Leay's fair skin and gray eyes. They were equally unlike the portrait of uncle Archie with which all the Carrington children were familiar, yet an intuition came to Molly.

"You are Garry Leaycraft!" she exclaimed. "How *ever* did you come to be in this room?" taking a step forward, and smiling as she spoke.

Slipping an arm under his sole remaining pillow, Garry reared his head — to allow him better opportunity — and for answer made a hideous face at his cousin.

This must have been from sheer force of habit, for certainly Molly was a pleasant object to look upon as she stood there, in her kirtled frock, with her blue eyes sparkling, her cheeks rosy, and tossed about her shoulders her long hair, thick, wavy, and of a warm ruddy brown. A sweet-faced, picturesque young maid was Molly Carrington, all the better to look at for having no thought of her own appearance.

"Number one walked herself in — without being invited — to entertain me, she said. H'm! she did n't stay long!" Garry chuckled. "She left by that door" — a long finger indicated it — "by *that* door, d' you hear? and you can skip by it, too. I've no use for girls!" He finished with another horrible grimace.

Molly was also an adept in the art of making faces, and proceeded to present the new cousin with her most finished performance; then throwing back her head she laughed merrily at his ferocious expression.

"You think that's smart — don't you?"

sneered Garry. "Get out, I tell you!" He raised his voice querulously. "If that fool Cecco was here I'd have him put you out. I've got a most beastly headache, and I'm not going to be bothered by you or anybody. There's the door — skip! — d' you hear me?"

"Thank you, I prefer to go as I came," retorted Molly, demurely; and was about to roll herself through the window, when she noticed how uncomfortable and really ill the boy on the lounge looked — with an arm doubled under his one pillow to make it a support for his head, and with heavy purple circles under the eyes that blinked so crossly in the strong light. With Molly thought and action were very apt to go together. To catch up the cushions Garry had thrown at her, and to run over and push them down comfortably behind his head was the work of a minute. Then she marched around the room, pulling down shades, closing blinds, and otherwise darkening the overbright room. "There! — that'll be more 'comfy' for your headache than all that glaring light," she remarked.

"That gives me something else to throw at you," was Garry's gratitude. Leaning forward, he aimed a pillow at her.

"Pooh! throw all you like; I'm not afraid of a sofa cushion, nor of you, either, Mr. Rudi-

bus!" valiantly declared Molly. "Only if *I* were a boy I'd not choose to throw things at people's backs — I'd want to fight fair."

"Now, see here" — began Garry, argumentatively; but a lusty yell from below had sent Molly through the window in double quick time.

"Mol-ly!" screamed Evelyn, "Marty and Viva 've got tired of waiting for you, and they're climbing up the wistaria! They *will* come!"

Hastily shutting the blinds of Ned's window behind her, Molly scudded across the piazza roof and looked over. Sure enough, Marty was laboring his way up, clinging to the vine with his plump, unpractised legs, and tearing away handfuls of the pretty blossoms in his efforts toward progress. Behind him toiled Viva, who, though older than the little brother, was yet his devoted follower and coadjutor in every mischief. Molly saw the determination on Marty's red little face, heard his hard breathing, and "Here's the ball," she cried cheerily, tossing it to the ground. "Viva, you pick it up — Marty, let's play you're trying to escape from a fire — and I'm a fireman coming to rescue you. You must drop just as I touch you. Look out there!" she called loudly, slid rapidly down the vine, and snatching the willing Marty as

she went by, fell with him and Viva in a laughing, breathless heap upon the ground.

"What 's all this rumpus?" demanded Leaycraft, appearing upon the scene. "You 're all to walk straight to the drawing-room and get your just deserts. Mother sends the orders."

"Did she hear us? Did it sound as if we were making a dreadful noise?" asked Molly anxiously, as she ran from one to another of her charges, straightening garments, tying ribbons and neckties, and smoothing their and her own hair.

"Noise? — enough to wake the dead!" unblushingly returned Leay, who in reality had heard only Molly's shout, and seen the fall upon the ground, as he turned the corner of the long, rambling house.

Roy was hunted up, found to be redolent of the stable, and dispatched to the upper regions to change his raiment before putting in an appearance in polite society; then the procession took up its march to the drawing-room.

"Well," observed Molly to Leaycraft, as they walked along, "so he came."

"Yes, he 's here, and you never saw a worse specimen of a selfish, spoiled cub in *your* life!" asserted Leay, immediately warming to his subject. "He beats us boys hollow! He 's a long gawky thing — tall as Rufe — and his eyes 're

blacker than ever — like two burnt holes in a blanket. I think he's a vicious animal, and needs taking in hand — some experiences under your uncle Pete's direction 'd do him good. What do you suppose? Since that rheumatic fever he has n't walked a step! Says he *can't* walk — can't stand even. He had to be *carried* to the carriage by his man. I feel sorry for that man! Took the whole of the back seat to lie off on, and let his dad sit front with Silas. Rufe and I had to foot it home. And Garry never once said, 'I'm sorry to crowd you all out — cat — dog — or anybody.' How's that for manners? Moment he got in the house kicked up a row — insisted he *must* have two rooms! Condescended to be willing to sleep in the one fixed for him, — Miss Gilmore's, you know, — but *must* have another for a sitting-room! If nurse and Elsa did n't have to pull Ned's room all to pieces and arrange it to suit the young idiot! And just think! — because Elsa did something or other that did n't please his lordship, he ordered her out of the room! Ordered her out — in her own house, mind you! And uncle Archie can't do one thing with him! Would n't I punch Mr. Garry's head though, if I got the chance!" Leay brandished his fists. "The spoilt, overbearing animal!"

"But perhaps he's really ill," said Molly, remembering the heavily-circled eyes and startling white face.

"Ill!" cried Leaycraft, with fierce energy. "Because a fellow's got a pain or an ache somewhere need he be as spiteful and ill-mannered as a bear with a sore head? Need he try to walk all over everybody? I know *we'd* not be allowed to do it! And he isn't so ill either. With my own ears I heard uncle Archie tell mother that the doctors all say Garry could walk and do a good deal more than he thinks he could — if he'd only brace up and try. He's been coddled and coddled until he thinks of nobody but himself. Well, never mind," with a chuckle, "if Rufus and I ever get the chance we'll wake the young man up a bit! Really, Molly, he is the *rudest!* the things he says!"

"H'm!" remarked Molly, reflectively, half tempted to tell Leay of her late encounter with Garry.

But the small procession was at the drawing-room door, and the next moment Molly's hand was in uncle Archie's clasp, and that tall gentleman was brushing her forehead with his long moustache, in a gentle kiss.

CHAPTER III.

SUNDRY DOINGS.

AFTER two weeks' stay at Hill Top, as the Carringtons' place was called, Mr. Leaycraft went away on a Western trip of several months' duration, leaving Garry comfortably domiciled among his relatives.

"I need n't ask you to be kind to my poor boy," uncle Archie told his sister; "your own tender heart will be his best excuse. And I know you will be patient with his — his moods, when you remember for how many years he has had no mother! That long, painful rheumatic attack did the rest. The boy has good in him, Letty, he would n't be his mother's child else!" Mr. Leaycraft's mild gray eyes grew moist. "It is the long illness that has demoralized him. But his health is better now, much better, except for those nervous headaches, — and he should be making an effort to rouse himself, to move about, to walk. The doctors we've consulted on our way home, in Paris, London, New York, all say the same — that Garry must begin to exert himself, to use his legs, or he

may become a confirmed invalid for life. He thinks he can't do it, and won't try; but I'm in hopes your young people will rouse him up to health and energy again. I'm going away to let him be alone with you all. Letty, he is my only child — do your best for me!"

"I will, Archie, I certainly will!" Mrs. Carrington replied warmly.

"My dear," whispered Mr. Carrington, who stood near, "I'm afraid you're taking a large contract upon your hands."

And as the days went on, truly it seemed so, for Garry continued to prove himself a very disagreeable person. His will was his only law — a law that ran counter to every plan that was proposed for his pleasure or well being. He refused to have any intercourse with his cousins, or to enter into any of their enjoyments. To be dressed late in the mornings, and to be carried by his man Cecco (a strong, phlegmatic Italian) from his sleeping room to the lounge in Ned's room was generally the extent of Garry's exertions for the day. There he would lie reading, or rather skimming through book after book — staring up at the ceiling with his fierce gloomy eyes, or storming at Cecco in choice English or Italian. Where words were not emphatic enough he supplemented them by throwing whatever was handiest at the long-suffering

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valet. Elsa Garry had ordered from his room the first day of his arrival. "She thinks she knows all there is in the world *to* know," he told his father, when remonstrated with for this behavior. "I *won't* have her poking her nose in here and bossing me. And as for Rufus and that conceited jack Leay — I've no use for them. What do I care about all their games and sport; what good does it do me *now* to hear about such things?" Garry's black eyes grew hard. "I won't have 'em in here. Aunt Letty can come in, — sometimes, — but I 'll *not* be bothered with a whole raft of youngsters racing in and out of my rooms. I can get on without their company. I don't want *one* of 'em, and if they force themselves on me I 'll make Cecco put 'em out. So you 'd better tell them what to expect."

As a result of this the Carrington young people let Master Garry severely alone, which that young man declared was just what he wanted. But had Cecco been given to telling tales out of school, one might have surmised, as time stole on, that perhaps Garry was not so sufficient unto himself, nor quite so indifferent to his cousins' doings as he would have had them believe.

When loud voices and laughter announced that an outdoor game was in progress Garry

immediately had Cecco lock the door of Ned's room, and lift him into his wheeled chair. Drawn close to the window which overlooked the playground, hiding himself behind the curtains, the sick boy would follow every movement of the game with interest — scowling when Rufus or Leay carried off the honors, turning up his lips contemptuously at Elsa's and Evelyn's uneven strokes, and, occasionally, chuckling over Molly's scientific play. When the rapid passing of feet through the passage-way, followed by a steady hum of voices in the room directly opposite Ned's, announced that school was "in," the wheeled chair was again in requisition. At such times Cecco knew he was to set his master's door slightly ajar, and be ready to close it again, noiselessly, at a moment's notice, while Garry sat behind that door and gave strict attention to all he could hear. Mrs. Carrington had decided that the mornings should continue to be devoted to study until the usual date in June when summer holidays began; and very entertaining Garry found the conversation, practical jokes, squabbles, and general good fellowship with which these young relatives of his enlivened their more sober occupation of acquiring knowledge. Rufus and Leay studied in the school-room, and recited to their mother in her own apartment; so did Molly; but while the boys re-

garded these recitations as merely a pleasant variation of the usual routine, to Molly they were trying times.

Garry soon guessed this. "She's a regular dummy!" he remarked to Cecco, on one occasion, when Molly had returned to the school-room in disgrace, and was being teased by the boys.

The Italian knew the epithet only as one of opprobrium frequently hurled at himself, and rejoicing in his own present exemption, promptly responded, "Si, signor!" then at his master's fierce scowl, edged discreetly behind the wheeled chair.

Garry soon learned that Elsa was as clever as Molly was stupid, but that she had small patience with the younger children whom she had undertaken to teach, and that, for some reason, this also was a trouble to Molly.

The fact of it was, Molly was n't happy these days. Two waitresses had come out from town, but their reign had been short, and Nurse and Molly were still working together. This, however, was no trial to Molly, as she enjoyed housework and was proud of being able to do it well. Even her own unfortunate lessons did not weigh upon her as did the constant friction in the school-room between Elsa and the little ones.

"Remember, there must be no interference from you between Elsa and the children," Mrs. Carrington had warned Molly. "You have refused to teach them; now see to it that you do not interfere." And very soon it grew to be the very hardest thing in the world for Molly *not* to interfere.

Not every clever person has the power to impart knowledge — Elsa had not, though she did have an exaggerated idea as to the obedience and respect due to her from her scholars. As the children were very far from sharing this idea, uncomplimentary remarks were freely exchanged, and some lively skirmishes took place in the school-room, while Molly sat behind the screen trying to study, with her fingers in her ears, and in her heart a great ache.

"She's just rubbing them the wrong way!" thought Molly, miserably. "Oh, if I only knew enough to teach!"

With her eyes on the pages of her book, but her mind filled with the stirring doings on the other side of the screen, small wonder that Molly took imperfect lessons to her mother, day after day, and that "incarcerations" were frequent.

Rushing into the school-room, on one of these occasions, for something he had forgotten, Leaycraft caught Molly in tears.

"Whew!" he whistled in astonishment, staring at her, hands in his pockets. "Mary Elizabeth turned Niobe! I feel like Henny-Penny—the skies must surely be going to fall! Now there's no use perking up and trying to pretend you have n't shed a tear," he went on severely, as Molly proudly shook back her hair and attempted a smile. She hated to be caught crying! "You can't fool your uncle Pete. What's the row? Out with it! Is it the incarcerations that're weighing on you?"

"Oh, I suppose I'll have *those* as long's I have lessons," returned Molly, shrugging her shoulders. "It's about the children I feel the worst—with Elsa!" She stopped abruptly.

"Things do hum sometimes!" admitted Leay; "the trouble is, Elsa thinks too much of Number One. But those youngsters are spoilt—from Evelyn down—and you've had a considerable hand in it, too, my lady. 'T won't hurt 'em to be sat upon for a while."

"Yes, it *does* hurt them," declared Molly. "Marty is *so* cross now, all the time; and for the last two nights, going to bed, Viva's had a regular crying time—just nervousness! Evelyn can take her own part, and Roy does n't care, but the little ones are getting so they simply dread the school-time. Nurse has no-

ticed it. She says Elsa's continual nagging is doing them harm. And I can't tell mother about it," Molly added hastily, anticipating the remark on Leay's lips, "because she's got Garry to bother her" ("Oh, she has, eh?" remarked that young gentleman, in his wheeled chair, behind the opposite door), "and the dressmaker here, and all our summer clothes to be made," went on the unconscious girl, "and — and — there 're other reasons, too," Molly finished, blushing rosy red, for she knew that the chief "other reason" for not letting Mrs. Carrington know the true state of affairs was her own disinclination to take the post Elsa was trying to fill.

"Well, then, since you feel so badly about it, why don't you teach the youngsters yourself?" inquired Leay.

"Teach?" cried out poor Molly, "— when I can't even get my own lessons right! Why d'you say such things? You know as well's I do what a *stupid* thing I am!" Her voice failed, and hastily she turned her back upon Leay to hide the unruly tears that would come.

With brotherly frankness Leaycraft had often informed his sister of what he termed her "mental vacuum," but this was the first time she had ever admitted it, and somehow the confession touched the boy.

“Well — you ’re not so awfully bad when the lesson — whatever it might be — is once pounded into your head. You don’t forget it — er — right away, I mean,” he said, in a clumsy attempt at comfort. Then seeing Molly’s face light up, he added hurriedly and awkwardly, “I’d help you, Molly, sure, if I had n’t promised Rufe to build that boat with him afternoons. You know he’d get mad if I deserted him. And really,” forcing himself into wrath, to overcome a certain sense of meanness that was troubling him, “really I don’t see why you should feel bound to carry all the children on your shoulders! Why can’t you let ’em fight their own battles, and you just take care of your own affairs? You’re not expected to look after the whole world! Hullo! — why there’s my knife, staring me in the face!” as he spoke pouncing upon his missing property lying under a chair. “Well, I’m off!” he announced airily. “‘S’m’ other time’ I’ll help you, Mary Elizabeth. Ta-ta!” and made his exit.

Molly sat and stared dejectedly off toward the window. The sudden hope which had sprung up in her mind — that Leay might be willing to help her, to coach her sufficiently for her to teach the children, died as suddenly as it had come, leaving a sharp sense of disappointment behind it. Strong, capable, and full of confi-

dence in everything else, in books and study Molly's constant failure had made her very distrustful of her own ability, and to teach the little brothers and sisters impressed her as an undertaking entirely out of her power. "I *know* I could n't do it!" she thought, gazing absently at the green fields and the shining Hudson which lay in the valley, below the window.

Oblivious of her imperfect lessons, fathoms deep in anxious thought, Molly heard no sounds, and when, suddenly, close at her elbow, a voice said brusquely, "See here!" she started violently, giving a little squeal of surprise; then whirled round and met the big black eyes of Garry.

He lay in his wheeled chair, behind which stood Cecco, blinking, and casting sly glances about the room.

"O-o-h!" exclaimed Molly, her rosy mouth remaining open in her amazement at the unwonted visitor, whom she had seen but once before — the day of his arrival.

Garry showed no embarrassment, and without preamble stated the object of his appearance. "See here; I'll help you with your lessons," he remarked affably. "Bring 'em along into my room."

Then Molly gasped, and wondered if she were dreaming. "But — why" — she said weakly, and stopped — words failed!

"Don't bother me about the whys and wherefores — I'm going to help you and that's enough," returned the young autocrat. "Bring your books and come on." He made a sign to Cecco to start the chair.

But, still with the feeling of being in a dream, Molly said hastily, "I can't go out of the school-room until I know my lessons. I'm — I'm — in disgrace!" The girl's cheeks grew scarlet, her honest blue eyes shamed, but she went on. "If you help me, it'll have to be in here. And — and I'm not clever like the others, I might's well tell you; it'll be real work helping me. I can't catch a thing quickly, as some people can, — from books, I mean; I have to be shown every single thing there is to know before I can understand a lesson. It won't be easy work for you!" She waited anxiously, for Garry was scowling heavily at her.

For a few minutes the offer hung in the balance; not for the world would Garry have had Rufus or Leay find him out of his room — and on his present errand. But the unusual spasm of kindness (perhaps 't was weariness of his self-imposed solitary confinement — who can say?) prevailed. "Oh, all right! If you must stay here, why you must, that's all," Garry said impatiently. "Cecco, keep an eye on that door. Now, you bring out your books. What!

such baby lessons stump you? You must be pretty empty in the upper story!" he added politely, turning over the pages of some worn volumes that Molly had handed him.

"I told you I was n't clever," she reminded him; and the proud gesture with which she threw back her long loose hair rather impressed Garry. "I've been all through the arithmetic and the German in those books, but I don't know how I ever did it—I could n't show anybody. And that's just what I want to do—I want to teach the three younger children. Marty has only baby lessons, I could manage those, but Evelyn is quite up with me in algebra,"—Molly gave a prodigious sigh,—“and Roy and Viva are the quickest youngsters! they'd be sure to pounce on any mistake I might make, and I'd be *sure* to make mistakes!" Again she sighed. "I'd much rather you'd show me these old lessons than about my own. Will you, really? I suppose you—you know algebra—and Latin and German"—but remembering the tales she had heard of her cousin's illness and pranks, Molly's tone was a trifle dubious.

Garry opened his black eyes at her. "Know them? well, I should smile!" he remarked elegantly. "What d'you suppose I've been doing all these years abroad? I have n't been

ill *all* the time. Guess I know more than the whole crew of your awfully clever people put together. Why, I've been speaking French, Italian, and German for the last five years—they're an old story to *me*. I'm A1 in classics—and as for algebra—pooh! child's play!" He snapped his fingers, then seeing that Molly looked properly impressed he asked curiously, "Why're you going to teach those imps? D'you like to do it?"

Molly threw out her hands. "I *hate* it! I think I'd rather scrub floors than teach!" she cried vehemently, then caught herself and added eagerly, incoherently, "But I'm going to, now—mother wanted me to—I can get on with the children. Indeed, Elsa *is* a *very* clever girl!" she finished abruptly, warmly, resenting the sneer that curled the new cousin's lips.

"Yes, I know all about that," Garry said dryly. "I live right opposite this room," jerking his thumb over his shoulder. "I ought to be able to put you through these baby lessons in an hour," he added, regarding the worn books with ill-concealed contempt. "Now suppose you begin."

As it happened, Garry possessed just the quality that Elsa lacked—he really could teach—and on this first day both the new brooms swept diligently. The result of this

proposition of Garry's was a complete and pleasant surprise for Mrs. Carrington the next day, and in the school-room a new order of things. While not rejoicing in the house-work which the exchange of duties brought, Elsa was yet only too happy to resign from teaching, and Molly reigned in her stead, much to the delight of the younger Carringtons and the surprise of the elder ones. "How does she *ever* manage to do it?" Elsa, Rufus, and Leaycraft asked one another; and there was some skilful "pumping" of Molly.

But that young person kept her secret — indeed she had to, under pain of Garry's fiery displeasure, and worse yet, the withdrawal of his valuable assistance. It is doubtful, though, if she could have continued to evade the sister's and brothers' curiosity but for the boat-building, which kept the boys out of doors every afternoon, and for the dressmaker, who absorbed a good deal of Elsa's time and attention. Only Mrs. Carrington knew of the new arrangement, and she was too pleased with it to offer any objections. "I'm thinking it's the very best thing for them both," she told her husband; and it was through her management that Molly got her study hour with Garry without the knowledge of the rest of the family — not even of Roy. Marty was the only one who shared the

secret, and he, in these days of Nurse's new occupation, had become Molly's shadow, haunting her footsteps and making large demands upon her time, — demands which were usually honored, for Molly dearly loved her small tyrant. So Marty, bound over to secrecy, made free of Garry's sitting-room while the lessons were going on, though not by any means to the satisfaction of its master. Garry as well as Marty was a spoiled child, and Molly's road to learning was not easy, nor always pleasant. The young girl, while good-natured and most anxious to profit by the help that was benefiting her so much, had yet a temper of her own, as Garry presently discovered, and a sturdy determination, as she expressed it, "not to be walked over," for which Garry secretly respected her.

But if there were trying times in the new arrangement, there were also, now and then, times which both the cousins enjoyed, when, lessons over, Garry brought out some of the many curios he had collected abroad, and related his travels and adventures — in Venice, Rome, and Switzerland, in quaint Holland, in Egypt, France, and fair England. Forgetting himself in his subject, he would talk freely, with spirit, and far more interestingly than could any boy of Molly's acquaintance. Generally Molly played audi-

ence, but occasionally she, too, took the floor, and in spite of the air of utter indifference which was then invariably assumed, she soon discovered that Garry enjoyed her stories of the boys' and her own doings out of doors. But when one day, growing bolder, Molly urged upon him to let the boys make friends with him — to allow himself to be taken downstairs at least for meals with the family, Garry was so surprised, so insulted and angry, that Molly had a most disagreeable experience.

“Don't you say that to me again, ever!” finished Garry stormily; his long thin face reddened with anger; his black eyes flashed. “D' you suppose *I* want to know your old family? ‘Games and fun’ indeed — when I can't walk, or even stand up on my feet! I've got to stay here till father comes back for me; but don't you imagine that I'm going to let you, or anybody else, force me into doing things I don't want to. I'll not do *one* thing more than I'm doing now. Just you remember that. This is the thanks a fellow gets for doing a kindness. But I'm through — the sooner you get out of here the better. Go quick!” And as Molly, dragging Marty along by the hand, vanished through the door, after her came the school-books, aimed by a sure hand.

“That's the end of it! Now I'll have to get

along alone," thought Molly later, mournfully. "What ever possessed me to say that to him? I suppose he'll never speak to me again! My poor lessons!"

She was greatly surprised, therefore, when the study hour came around the next day, to see Cecco standing at Garry's door, waiting, he informed her, to usher her and Marty in. And after a slight hesitation in went Molly and the little brother.

"Oh, there you are!" remarked Garry at sight of her, as coolly and affably as if nothing had occurred. "Bring on the books, Cecco. Come, Molly, sail in!" And Molly wisely accepted the situation, determining in her own mind that she would offer Garry no more advice.

She was able to keep to her resolution, and, strange to say, it was at his own proposition that, a week or ten days later, Garry was taken down to the drawing-room, and made his first appearance among his relatives. It happened in this wise.

One afternoon, after an unusually amiable and satisfactory lesson hour, Garry began showing Molly some wonderful performances in building card-houses. (The pieces of cardboard were of different shapes, hand painted, and of such designs that with them the most stately and fas-

cinating castles, cathedrals, and palaces might be built.) Garry's masterpiece was a castle, bold and rugged as that of Sintram, battlemented and turreted; and to-day, elated with his success, daring still further heights, he lighted and placed carefully upon the castle turrets two tiny, exquisitely colored Venetian lanterns.

"There!" exclaimed the boy, drawing back and viewing his handiwork with the utmost pride.

"Oh, beautiful!" breathed Molly. "I wish all the others could see it!"

"O-o-hee!" cried Marty ecstatically; he gave a prance of delight, stumbled heavily against Molly, — and down went the airy creation, flat as a pancake, one of the fragile lanterns falling on the table and breaking into several pieces.

One dreadful second, then leaning forward Garry brought his open palm with a loud smack against Marty's round little cheek. "Take *that*, you meddlesome little wretch!" he cried furiously.

There was another infinitesimal fraction of time — then the astonished Marty's howl of outraged feeling filled the air, and springing up, with eyes flashing like blue steel, Molly flew at Garry and clutched his thin shoulders with her two strong little hands. "Oh, you tyrant! Oh, you coward! I could shake you to pieces!

How *dare* you strike my little brother!" she cried out, pinning Garry against the back of his chair, and glaring down at him. The next minute she caught her hands away with a gesture of contempt, and running to the sobbing child snatched him up in her arms. The print of Garry's fingers showed cruelly red on the little fellow's fair cheek. "Come, Marty!" Molly said sharply, and bore him swiftly to the door.

But Garry had found his tongue. Leaning forward, he banged his fist on the table "I'm the one to get mad — not you!" he declared. "What about my lantern, I'd like to know?"

Molly paused to answer. "'Twas an accident — you *know* it was," she said breathlessly; "and as for the lantern — you yourself said it cost the merest trifle — you've got more of them." She took a step nearer. "Not a creature has ever laid a harsh finger on Marty since he was born," she went on fiercely (Marty's sobs grew louder), "and that you should be so mean — so cruel! I'd rather you'd struck me instead!" She finished with a little choke, and turning ran out of the room.

For two days Garry's door remained closed, and Molly went by it with proud head and averted eyes. On the afternoon of the third day, when she came out of the school-room, the

door was ajar and Cecco stood there and motioned her to enter. But, tossing back her long hair, with great dignity, Molly said (in tones quite loud enough to be heard inside the room), "I am *not* coming in. You can tell your master that," and marched on, holding Marty by the hand.

This went on for several days, Cecco, in broken English, extending his master's invitation, and Molly as regularly and firmly refusing it.

"Bah! *I* don't care! *Let* her stay away!" shouted Garry, one afternoon in high dudgeon, from behind the door.

But he did care, all the same. As the days dragged on, with only Cecco and his own gloomy thoughts for company, the boy realized more and more that Molly's visits had made a great difference in his dull life. Her honest admiration of his superior knowledge had been very agreeable, her stories of outside doings full of interest for the "shut-in," and besides, Molly was a cheerful young person, with a wholesome humor of her own, and a fund of good nature which had given more enjoyment to the study hour than Garry had realized at the time.

"Hateful little spoiled brat — that Marty!" indignantly reflected the other spoiled child; and the very next afternoon, when Molly and

her small brother were coming out of the school-room, the opposite door flew open, and out shot the wheeled chair with Garry in it. "Say — Molly — come in; will you?" he remarked, in a cordial, most off-hand manner.

Molly drew Marty closer to her side and edged away. "No, I thank you," she said stiffly.

"I won't ever hit him again — I promise you — truly I won't," urged Garry, most persuasively, to his own surprise. Then, as Molly made a motion to turn away, he sent his chair forward, close to where she stood. "I'm sorry I made such a fuss — sorry I hit him!" he said earnestly, catching hold of a piece of Molly's sleeve to detain her. "You talk about fair play — can a person do more than be sorry, and *say* so?" he cried out hotly, an expression in his sombre black eyes that appealed straight to Molly's tender heart.

"Of course we forgive you," she said quickly, generously, "don't we, Marty?" To which Marty gave no assent, staring dubiously at Garry from behind Molly's back, whence he had retreated. "But there 're only a few days more before school closes," went on Molly, "and I can stick it out — without bothering you with my lessons."

Garry eyed her, scowling heavily. "See

here," he remarked, "you talk about forgiving, and you 're still mad with me — you know very well you are. Tell you what," here the scowl disappeared and the corners of the boy's mouth began to widen, "you come back and let me help you, and," the smile was now a broad grin, "and — *I'll go downstairs this very evening!* There now!" His tone conveyed, "Human magnanimity can go no farther!" And Molly agreed with him.

"Honest — honest?" she cried eagerly, her face alight.

"Honest — cross my heart!" laughed Garry.

"Then I'll come right in now, and bring my books and Marty," declared Molly, joyfully.

And that evening, true to his own proposition, Garry made his first appearance in the drawing-room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERY OF TIFFT ISLAND.

MOLLY came careering down the lawn ; under her arm — partly enveloped in a shawl — the large red umbrella which was known in the family as Princess Riccabocca. Its swollen appearance aroused the curiosity of Marty, who sat cross-legged on the grass under the twin maples, holding on to his heels and rocking himself meditatively to and fro.

“What ’ou dot in that umb’ella?” he asked with engaging interest, as his sister drew near.

“Never you mind,” returned Molly, carelessly, making an ineffectual effort to conceal the Princess’s unusual corpulence in the folds of her own pink gingham skirt. “What’re you doing here alone? Where’s Garry — and Cecco — and everybody?” as she spoke glancing at the unoccupied rattan lounge, heaped with cushions, where Garry was wont to lie nearly all of the summer day, with the Italian servant at hand to run his many errands.

“Garry’s dorn on Tiff’ Island,” was Marty’s unexpected reply. “Are ’ou dot apples in the umb’ella? I ’ants one!” Cocking his

round little head on one side, he gazed knowingly at the Princess, whose ungainly proportions suggested to him a secret hoard of his favorite fruit.

But for once Molly was deaf to his wishes. "Garry on Tifft Island!" she exclaimed in shrill astonishment. "How could he ever go there? He can't walk. How did he ever go, Marty? Tell Molly."

"*I'll* tell you, Molly — *I* know," volunteered a voice from overhead, and Roy slid down the trunk of the maple, a good deal dishevelled as to clothes, and considerably out of breath, but full of information, which he cheerfully proceeded to impart. "I was up in the maples, lookin' at the nest, — did n't touch it, truly an' honest I did n't, just lookin' at it, — an' Garry was on the lounge all alone. He was *fumin'*, too, 'cause Cecco did n't get back from the village in two minutes. He's a nawful impatient person. Well, an' Rufus an' Leay come runnin' up from the river, an' they said, 'Come see how high the tide is gettin' over by Tiff' Island,' an' all about the load of fishes they was goin' to catch. First he said he *would n't* go — an' then they told 'im some more — an' then he jus' said he'd go. An' Rufus an' Leay, they made a han' basket — you know," Roy crossed his freckled, not over-clean little hands to indicate the style

of locomotion he referred to, and Marty, who was following the narrative closely, nodded with quick comprehension; so did Molly.

"Well — an' they took 'im off that way," went on the "Spectator," with enjoyment. "But Leay *would n't* let me go along, too. He just drove me back;" this in a tone of disgust. "So I went up in the maples again, an' I seen" —

"Oh, Roy! — *saw*," corrected Molly, hastily. "Only Jim, the stable boy, says 'seen' for 'saw'!"

Marty rocked himself, chuckling gently; but Roy was too full of his story to have time for resentment. "Well, then, I seen — *sawn* — oh," twisting his narrow shoulders, "*saw* 'em all go over to the island in the boat. The boys rowed, an' Garry laid off in the bottom. An' then — an' — an' *then*" — Roy grew so excited he could scarcely get the words out — "they stayed a little while on the island — all of 'em — then Rufus an' Leay took the boat, an' — an' — come rowin' off, an' — left Garry there — all alone by *himself*! An' he's begun callin' an' wavin' an' hollerin' like eve'thing! I — I — was jus' comin' to tell somebody when you" —

"See here," cried Molly, breaking into the narrative, suddenly anxious to divert the attention of her audience, and be free of their pres-

ence, "do you boys know that Jim and Silas are in the orchard picking apples? Evelyn and Viva are there, and mother said you boys might go too. Don't you want to?"

Marty rolled to his feet, he needed no second invitation. Roy, however, hesitated. "But Garry" — he said, opening his pale gray eyes at his sister.

Molly nodded. "I'll attend to Garry while you and Marty eat your apples," she assured the little fellow. And just then, over the brow of the hill, came to them, borne on the warm late August breeze, the sound of cheerful voices — of laughter. That was irresistible, and off scampered the boys to the orchard.

Molly waited until the small figures had disappeared from sight, then turned, and still unconsciously holding on to the Princess, she ran swiftly down the hill to the water's edge, and strained her eyes in the direction of Tifft Island. It was a tiny islet, lying at a considerable distance from the mainland, and bare of verdure save for a belt of willow trees which semicircled one end, growing thin and sparse at the top and thicker at the water's edge. One scraggly, stunted willow reared itself apart from the others — a monument of ugliness. Four spindly poles supported a roughly thatched roof, which formed a shelter from the summer sun

for the fishermen who sometimes used the barren island as a drying-place for their nets. Under this shelter Molly now saw a solitary figure, which she easily recognized as that of Garry.

"But he is up — *alone!*" she cried out in astonishment. Distinctly she saw the tall boy make several wavering steps forward on the uneven ground — from one pole to the other of his shelter.

Molly clapped her hands joyfully, then made a trumpet of them, and with all the strength of her vigorous young lungs shouted, "Gar-ry! — Gar-ry! I'm coming!" Instantly she saw the boy's figure slip to the ground — and not waiting for an answer to her call or to find her brothers, Molly dashed away to the boat-house, and in an incredibly short time had Ned's boat, the "Sea Nymph," out, and was sending herself over the water with as much speed as the strong adverse current would allow.

Innumerable visits to Tift Island had taught Molly that at high tide the quickest and easiest landing was to be found at a point farthest from the shelter. She made straight for that point, and after more than one strenuous effort, succeeded in running the "Sea Nymph" high and dry upon the low earthy beach. Then she leaped out, and, to her great surprise, saw that Garry

was — not under the shelter where she had last seen him, but on this other side of the island, only a few feet away from where she stood.

“Wh-y! you were under the shelter — how did you *ever* get over here?” cried out Molly, starting back.

Flat upon dirty, brown Mother Earth, in the grateful shade thrown by the scraggly willow, lay Garry, looking as black and ugly as a concentrated thunder cloud. “I — under the shelter?—you’re dreaming,” he answered brusquely, evasively; then the storm of his wrath broke. “How’d I get here? How did I get here?” he repeated fiercely, his sombre eyes flashing, raising himself on his elbow and scowling at his cousin. “Go ask those cowardly, impudent brothers of yours — those unfeeling brutes! who enticed me here, and then sneaked off and deserted me — left me alone — helpless — not able to move a step — in this desolate place! They may think this a mighty fine joke to play on me, but I bet they’ll sing another tune when uncle Carrington gives ’em each a thundering licking! I’d enjoy laying it on myself,” with a motion of the hand as if laying a stripe upon the boys’ backs. “It’s a low, dirty trick — and uncle’s *got* to punish those fellows. I’ll tell him the whole story — just as soon as he gets home! He’d *never* allow those brutes to treat

me like this — I know he would n't!" Only lack of breath brought Garry's remarks to a close.

"Father would n't let the boys tease — torment — you know — annoy you, but he'd never *beat* them for doing it. He'd never do such a thing to any of us children, so you need n't expect it," remarked Molly, gravely. "But he'll be sure to punish Rufus and Leay — some other way — if," a little pleadingly, "if you feel you *must* tell on them."

"*'Must tell!'*" sputtered the injured one; "you *bet* I'll tell! What d' you take me for — a fool? to pass over" —

"I'm *awfully* sorry you've had to be here alone — in this way, Garry," broke in Molly, soothingly. "I only heard of it just now. Roy saw you from the top of the maple-tree on the lawn, and told me. I did n't know where the boys were — I did n't wait to hunt them up — I came right over to take you home. I'll fix you comfortably in the bottom of the 'Nymph' — and it's only a very few steps to it." She drew nearer as she spoke, her hands extended to help the boy to his feet.

Garry, however, did not respond; he fairly glared at Molly. "If he does n't beat Rufus and Leaycraft — he's — he's — as bad as they are — every bit!" he roared. "And what're

you talking about taking me back in that boat? D' you suppose," this was with a sneer, "that *you 're* strong enough to carry me to it and lift me in, and that I'd let you, if you were? Not much! About a dozen hours ago I sent that lazy scamp Cecco to the village — on an errand; he must 've showed up by now, or," threateningly, "I'll know the reason why. Go back and get him, and he can lift me into the boat. Get on! I don't want to lie here in this broiling sun all day! Why don't you go?" He scowled horribly at the girl.

But Molly only came a step or two nearer. "Ah, Garry, could n't you just make an effort, and let me help you walk to the boat? If we only get there I'm sure I could roll you in over the edge. Do try!" she coaxed most persuasively. "It's dead against the tide coming over here — 't would take *ever* so long to go back and hunt up Cecco and row over again. Perhaps you could walk a few steps if you tried — and I'm strong," straightening her lithe young figure; "you could lean hard on me. I won't fail you. Ah, Garry, come!" Again she bent forward, her hands out.

"You talk like a drivelling idiot!" returned this polite young gentleman. "Lean on you? I think I see myself! When you know very well I can't even stand on my feet at" — He finished

abruptly, for, with a roguish smile, Molly was pointing to his feet, to the brown earth, a little moist, which was sticking on the extension soles of the boy's boots.

"Garry Leaycraft, I do believe you *can* stand up — yes, and walk too," she declared, shaking a finger at him. "When I started for the island, in the 'Nymph,' you were under the shelter — I *saw* you! Now, how did you ever get over on this side if you did n't walk? No one was here to help you, so how did you do it?"

For an instant Garry was dumfounded — so utterly disconcerted that he could n't find words. The blood dyed his sallow face scarlet; his heavy lids fell over his eyes. But soon he rallied. "Just find out how I got here! You're so awfully smart; just find out for yourself!" he answered sulkily. Then his voice rose excitedly. "*Won't* I be thankful, though, when my father comes and takes me to California!" he cried fervently. "*Won't* I rejoice to get away from all you malicious, cantankerous people! You're always spying on me — the whole lot and kit of you — every single member of the family — I don't except *one*. I *detest* you all — and once I get away I'll never be seen in these parts again, *I can tell you!*" Again his breath gave out.

Now it was Molly who flushed scarlet. "You should be ashamed to say that!" she told him, much hurt. "Mother and father have been perfectly lovely to you, and, goodness knows, we children 've all tried our very best to be nice and kind to you." Then as the injustice of the accusation grew upon her, she threw back her long hair with a proud toss of the head, and burst out indignantly, "Not one of us has ever spied on you — you *know* that. We're not that sort — and as for being malicious and cantankerous" — words failed Molly, and walking rapidly to the boat she began pushing it down the beach toward the water.

"What're you doing? Where are you going?" shouted Garry, sending a handful of dry fishbones and small pebbles against Molly's skirts. "I say — hold on!"

Molly never turned. "I am going to find Cecco — since you insist on having him. He can come back for you, and row you home," she answered over her shoulder, with severe dignity. By this time the "Sea Nymph" was afloat in shallow water, and springing upon a small rock Molly prepared to step aboard, when an unusual sound made her look around.

There was Garry coming rapidly toward her, rolling himself over and over on the dirty fish-bestrewn ground, entirely regardless of the

light gray clothes he wore. Seeing that he had secured Molly's attention, this curious boy came to a pause, and, still at full length, supporting his head on one hand, remarked argumentatively, but without one trace of anger in his voice, "Now you're going off mad as a hornet — simply *raving* — just because I mentioned that your brothers had played a contemptible trick on me. Yes, you are mad — furious!" as Molly turned her eyes on him. "That's why you're going away and leaving me here alone — as they did — in pure revenge, because I objected to being treated badly. Call that being kind to me? Why, you wouldn't treat your old dog this way. The whole truth of it is you're all mad that I'm at Hill Top. You all hate me — you'll all be delighted to have me go. *I* can see it — I am not blind!" Garry's tone was positively pathetic, he drew down the corners of his mouth, while his black eyes kept close watch upon his cousin's open, expressive countenance.

Molly's eyes were wide with astonishment. "If you can't twist things to suit yourself!" she cried indignantly. Then, with a sudden resolve, she stepped down from her rock and walked to within a few feet of the prostrate cousin. "Now listen," she remarked sternly, eyeing Mr. Garry. "You may tell father any

story you choose about the boys, and get them punished — I can't prevent you — if you *will* be a tell-tale. But you've *got* to take back what you said just now — about the whole family being unkind to you, and spying on you. Father and mother have been simply *beautiful* to you, they've treated you so well. And not one of us has ever spied on you." (It was well for Molly's argument that she did not know what was going on just then behind the belt of willow trees at her back.) "You've got to own up to having said what is n't true — own up in good plain English, too. And you've *got* to let me help you up, and to the boat. If you don't do both of these things and pretty soon, too, I'll get in the 'Sea Nymph' and go off home, and you can just stay here alone till Cecco finds his way over and rows you back. There now!" Molly tossed back her hair, straightened herself as erect as a lance, looking very determined, and very sweet and pretty, too, all aglow with loyalty and honest indignation.

Garry's face darkened; his heavy eyebrows met in an ugly black line across his forehead. "'*Got* to?'" he queried incredulously.

"Yes, *got* to," returned Molly unflinchingly. As Molly's anger had risen so had her voice, and these remarks were distinctly audible to,

and much enjoyed by, Rufus and Leay in their boat under the drooping branches of the willows.

"Bully for Mary Elizabeth C.!" ejaculated Leaycraft, under his breath. "I'd like first-rate to pommel his Nibs for her!"

"I think we'd better let 'em know we're here, and take him home," suggested Rufus; but this was overruled by the stronger willed brother.

"This is Molly's little funeral; we'll let her conduct it," was Leay's argument. And indeed, Molly appeared in no need of help.

The black and the blue eyes met — each pair apparently equally resolute — then suddenly Garry's frown vanished, his head sank back upon the earth, and he broke into a fit of laughter — genuine laughter that brought tears into his eyes, and astonishment to the two behind the willows. "'Says the flea to the elephant, Who 're you shovin'?"' quoted Garry. "Think *you* could make *me* do anything I didn't want to?" And off he went into another spasm of merriment.

Laughter was rare with this boy; and this attack was so contagious that Molly could scarce keep her gravity. "Well?" she demanded presently, not trusting herself to a longer sentence.

Then Garry raised up on his elbow, and grew sober. "See here, you're not forcing me into this, and you need n't think so. What I'm going to say will be said because I *choose* to say it — remember that!" he remarked with considerable emphasis. "Uncle Carrington and aunt Letty have been very decent to me — I guess kinder than I deserve." (Molly could hardly believe her ears!) "*They've* never spied on me in any way, and I don't mind allowing that aunt Letty is a pretty good sort. Does that satisfy you?" He opened his big eyes at Molly. "As for the rest of you" — Garry waved his disengaged hand with the air of a grand seigneur — "you *might* pass in a crowd; but I've no use for any of you. 'Tis n't likely I'll ever give a second thought to any one of you after I get to California — except to those brothers of yours, those brutes that've played this scurvy trick on me! I'll pay *them* off first chance! Does this *amende honorable* suit your grand ladyship? I'll give you no other!"

"Y-e-s!" answered Molly, with hesitating but laudable magnanimity, adding suggestively, "Perhaps, after all, the boys did n't mean to desert you. Don't you — er — hate to be a tell-tale?"

"Not in the least," was the brisk reply, Garry accepting the opprobrious term as readily

as Bob Acres did the imputation of cowardice. "I shall tell uncle every word, and — as I said before — I wish he 'd lick 'em within an inch of their lives!"

("Thanks awfully!" murmured Leaycraft, behind the willows, giving Rufus a poke in the ribs for looking so serious.)

"As for my walking to the boat — I'm perfectly willing to try — on condition that you show me how to do it." Garry's tone conveyed, "Now you're in a fix!" and this roused Molly to action.

Hastily she again drew the "Sea Nymph" up on the beach, leaned into the boat, and jubilantly returned to Garry, bearing in her arms the portly red form of Princess Riccabocca. "You said *perhaps* you'd try the crutches this afternoon," she said persuasively, her rosy little face all smiles. "So I hunted out this old pair that Ned used once when he was lame. I took them to the maples disguised this way," drawing the crutches from the folds of the old umbrella, "thinking we might get a good chance to try them on the lawn, and I must have thrown the Princess into the 'Sea Nymph' when I was getting her out of the boat-house. Anyway, here they are, just in the very nick of time — eh? Now," ignoring Garry's very doubtful "Humph!" "you take hold of those wil-

low branches and raise yourself up—I'll help you, too—and just as soon as you are on your feet I'll slip one of the crutches under your arm. That'll support you until I can get the other crutch under your other arm. Then you'll be all right. See?"

Garry, however, appeared not to be so sanguine of the result. His face grew paler, his black eyes widened, and reluctantly, evidently full of nervous misgivings, he began trying to carry out the instructions he received, while the two behind the willows craned their necks to follow his every movement.

"He *can* walk—how else could he ever have got here from the shelter?" thought Molly, and worked like a little beaver, giving her cousin both substantial support and plentiful words of encouragement. But, in spite of the help of the stout trunk of the willow, the crutches, and of Molly's strong little hand and willing shoulder, and of his own evident disposition to make the exertion,—in spite of all these the boy had hard work to get upon his feet, and there, barely held his equilibrium. From side to side he swayed, his knees relaxing, his ankles doubling under him in a limp and utterly useless fashion that brought remorse to his companion. "I'm too hard on him—he *could n't* have walked from the shelter!" she reflected.

Pale, cross, almost resentful, Garry would have given up all effort after the second or third attempt, but for Molly's persistent urging, her unstinted praise, and — now and then — her sly teasing. With strenuous effort the procession of two got, very slowly, over the bare flat ground until the short distance to the "Sea Nymph" was nearly accomplished.

Then, suddenly, with a sharp, startled exclamation, Garry dropped the crutches, made two or three headlong, uncertain strides, — without support, — and gaining the boat threw himself forward, half over the side.

"I heard a noise!" he declared. "Somebody's watching us — to go away and make fun of me! This is *your* doings!" waving an accusing hand at poor Molly, who stood aghast. "Go after 'em! Over there! — over there!" he cried excitedly, pointing to the fringe of willows on the island's edge. "Go see! Don't bother me — *go!*" pushing his cousin roughly from him. "Go see who 't is! Go — go!"

"*I* did n't hear any noise," began Molly, soothingly.

"Go see — go — *go!*" screamed Garry; and forced to leave him in his uncomfortable position, Molly darted away in the direction pointed out.

The two lookers-on had fallen into a dispute

— Rufus urging that they should make their appearance on the island and offer to row Garry home, and Leaycraft stubbornly refusing. In the heat of argument and his desire to get a better view of Garry Leay had made a misstep and stumbled over the oars. Preoccupied with her charge, Molly had not noticed the noise, which, however, had been perfectly distinct to Garry's sharp ears.

Somewhat doubtfully the girl parted the willow boughs and looked out on the river. Sure enough, there was no one there — for Rufus and Leay were sending their skiff shooting over the water; and protected by the willow belt from the vision of the two on the island, rapidly made their way to the mainland, while Molly returned to the "Sea Nymph" to reassure Garry.

This, however, was not easy to do, as he had lost the little confidence he had possessed, and kept starting nervously, without the slightest reason. He made no effort to help himself, though sternly refusing to let Molly leave him to seek Cecco. So getting the lower part of his inert body into the boat was no easy task for the little cousin. When at last this was accomplished, Garry lying in the bottom of the boat, the "Sea Nymph" launched, and Molly bending to the oars, between the heat of the day and her great exertions the girl's cheeks

rivalled the reddest rose in color, and the short locks of her brown hair sprang out in saucy little curls around her perspiring forehead.

Surreptitiously — while the unconscious Molly was “tacking” and otherwise considering the tide — Garry eyed the sweet face opposite him. Presently he asked curiously, “Say, Molly, what makes you so anxious for me to walk? You’ve been at me all summer to do it. I’ll be going away to California in two or three weeks more, so ’t wouldn’t make any difference to you here whether I walked about or lay on a lounge all day.”

Molly’s honest eyes grew wide in surprise. “I’m thinking of the difference to *you!*” she cried. “Why, you would n’t want to be so helpless all your life — lying down, and babied, waited on and cuddled — would you?” she continued bluntly. “You’ll soon be seventeen, you know. There’ll be college for you, and I know uncle Archie wants you to be a lawyer and practise in his office by and by. I heard him tell mother that. And, besides, think of all you’re losing, Garry, — it’s so perfectly splendid to run about, and ride, and swim, and row! I often feel sorry that you’re out of it all — it makes a boy so — so — eh” — Molly grew confused — “well, a sort of a poke, to be lying down — waited on all the time. But now

you 've made a start to walk, you 'll keep on trying — every day, won't you?"

Garry's only answer to this speech was a grimace; but there are grimaces and grimaces, and at this one Molly laughed, with a pleasant and very unusual feeling of comradeship with her cousin; and the rest of the voyage was made in silence.

A little crowd stood on the wharf to receive them — Rufus, Leay, Elsie, Roy, the Irish setter, Dan, and Cecco, the latter of whom sprang into the boat as soon as it was near enough, — to his master's assistance. Leaycraft was well to the front. "Hullo!" he cried, with twinkling eyes that instantly aroused Garry's ire. "Why did n't you stay on the island till we got back? Why did n't you make yourself comfortable under the shelter until" —

"Molly Carrington, Mother's been so worried about you!" interrupted Elsa, quickly, "we could n't imagine where you 'd gone until Roy told" —

"You 're a brute — a contemptible, cowardly brute!" thundered Garry, who at that moment arrived on the wharf in Cecco's arms, addressing Leay. The boy's voice was thick with rage. "You think you 're very smart, don't you? But you 'll change your tune pretty soon." He raised himself in the Italian's hold and shook an

angry fist at Leaycraft. "Just as soon as uncle Carrington comes home I shall tell him of the dastardly trick you two've played on me; you'll see what *he* will say to it! *My* father left me here under the care of *your* father," — passion almost choked Garry, — "and if you are n't *well* punished I'll telegraph to my father this very night to come take me home. You took advantage of me, you cowards!"

"You're not a boy — you're a baby! A dear little piece of rare china to be done up in cotton wool for fear of being smashed!" began Leaycraft, tauntingly.

"Now, stop, Leay!" cried out the girls; and with a quick gesture for silence Rufus stepped before his brother and addressed Garry.

"We *have* played you a mean trick — and I, for one, feel pretty small over it," he said distinctly, the color hot in his boyish face. "You have a right to be mad with us, and I — and Leay, too, I'm sure" (ignoring the flippant, "Speak for yourself, John, not for me!" which Leaycraft threw in), "are ready to take any punishment father may give us. He'll be angry, I know" —

Snatching the cap from his head Garry dashed it into Rufus's face. "You're worse than he is," he roared. "You miserable mealy-mouth!" Then he flashed out at Cecco, "What're you

standing here gaping for, you idiot? Take me up to my room!" And Cecco's double trot soon carried the pair out of sight.

The girls ran up the hill together, Elsa laying down the law in stringent fashion as they went.

"I feel a mean hound!" remarked Rufus, gloomily.

"I don't — I feel a cheerful benefactor," declared the incorrigible Leaycraft. "Your uncle Pete promised that if a chance came he'd give that spoiled beggar an experience — and he's done it, that's all. Tell you!" with a sudden change of tone, "Mary Elizabeth's gray matter may n't be of the first quality, but she's plucky, no mistake about that! Think of her getting that lubber on his pegs when — Hullo, Tatler!" as Roy, who, giving vent to his excitement over the fracas, had been turning cartwheels up and down the pier, closely pursued by Dan, now bobbed up with alert ears close at his brother's elbow, — "collecting news for the Carrington Local? You ought to bring out an exciting Extra *this* afternoon."

Straight to her mother went Molly, and in the "strictest confidence" told of the exciting events of the afternoon, told it in what the children were wont to designate as "Molly's way" — frankly, honestly, but, as she went along, offering excuses for all the offenders. "And

is n't it the very strangest thing how Garry got across the island, mother?" the young girl finished, anxiously. "There was nobody to help him, so he *must* have walked — and his boots looked as if he had — yet he could *barely* stand up when I asked him — even with the crutches and my helping him. He 'd have gone flat on the ground if the 'Sea Nymph' had n't been so near. *Is n't* it strange, mother?"

"Very strange!" returned Mrs. Carrington, thoughtfully. "I'm glad Garry has been induced to stand on his feet," she added, "it may lead him on to further exertion; but I am *very* sorry that my sons should have played such an unkind trick upon their helpless cousin. I know your father will be very much annoyed when he hears of it, and disappointed, as I am, that they are not more to be trusted."

Mr. Carrington, however, never heard of the escapade of Tift Island.

Garry refused to appear at dinner, and Rufus and Leay ate theirs with the unpleasant feeling of being on the edge of a precipice. But later in the evening, as Molly was escorting Marty through the upper hall, to the nursery, Garry's door opened, and, with a low bow, Cecco presented her with a note. It was addressed to Molly, and this is what was in it, in Garry's big, sprawling handwriting:

"Those boys deserve to be kicked from one end of Tift Island to the other and back again. They're cowardly *brutes*! I'll *never* forgive them. But aunt Letty's a decent, good sort, and you did your best this afternoon. On account of you two, I've decided I won't tell uncle Carington the low trick those wretches played me. This is on one condition—that they *swear* they'll keep their mouths shut, and not go around blabbing the whole thing to everybody. They're not to open their heads about it to me, or any other person. If they do I'll make things hot for them, and *make* uncle cowhide them within an inch of their lives. You can tell them this from me.

GARRY."

Oblivious of Cecco's inquisitive eyes, Molly sprang to the partly open door and pounded upon the panel. "Garry! all right! It's all right! I know the boys'll agree!" she called joyfully. "I'm awfully glad you've changed your mind about telling!" and then willingly interpreted the grunt that came in response as meaning "Good-night!" from the spoiled child within.

As may be imagined, the boys were much relieved at Garry's unexpected decision.

"He's come out of it better than we have," declared Rufus, with conviction, when he and

Leay were in the privacy of their own apartment, disrobing for the night. "I'm through with practical jokes for a while."

"Pooh! you're entirely too soft!" retorted Leay, made irritable by sundry sharp pricks of conscience. "*I'm* not sorry. Why, now he's been forced to make the attempt, you'll see, he'll go on practising walking every day, until, by and by, my Lord Mogul will be dancing the highland fling on his own two pedal extremities — merry as a cricket. All brought about by our taking him to Tifft Island! Would he have put foot to ground else? You've got an entirely wrong point of view, Rufus Longlegs. We're under no obligation to Garry — it's *he* that owes us — you and your uncle Pete — a tremendous vote of thanks. Now, let's drop the subject — I'm deadly sick of it!"

CHAPTER V.

RELATING TO A PICNIC.

GARRY remained in indignant seclusion for several days after the affair of Tifft Island. Then, what with the loneliness indoors and the all-charmingness outdoors, he concluded to let bygones be bygones, and again began making his appearance on the lawn. Rufus and Leay he treated with pointed and haughty indifference, which he further accentuated by a very unusual graciousness to Mrs. Carrington, to Molly, and a few other chosen members of the family. But Garry refused absolutely to put foot to ground on his own account, lying on his lounge, or being transported from place to place in Cecco's strong arms, to the disappointment and exasperation of Molly.

"For I'm *sure* he could walk if he tried," she repeatedly declared to her mother.

Mrs. Carrington, too, was disappointed. "I hoped to have had Garry well established on his feet long before you came for him," she said regretfully to her brother, when he arrived to take his son home. "But he is not easily influenced."

"No — eh — he is n't," agreed gentle Mr. Leaycraft, "therefore I value all the more the great change for good which I see in him. His being willing to mingle with the family at all is an immense gain — must do him good! And I find him more cheerful — more — eh — reasonable. Indeed, Letty," there was a sudden infusion of warmth into the speaker's mild, level voice, "I feel I have much to thank you for. You have accomplished a good deal."

Encouragement over Garry's condition sent up Mr. Leaycraft's spirits, and Garry himself, gratuitously announcing his delight at his approaching departure, grew quite unusually gay and willing to join in the small round of festivities which Mrs. Carrington had planned. The last of these, and the most eagerly looked forward to, was a picnic at the Point, a lonely but very lovely spot several miles from Hill Top, and a charming place for an *al fresco* meal.

The day selected proved itself perfect, — from the point of weather, — clear and bright, in spite of the soft late September haze, blue-skyed, and with a delicious touch of crispness in the air which stirred the blood alike of young and old. Some congenial young neighbors swelled the party; and as near the appointed hour as could be accomplished, in jubilant spirits, with much talk and laughter,

the cavalcade set forth. It consisted of the Wainwrights and Parkers in three surries; the Carrington contingent followed in three other nondescript vehicles, while Garry brought up the rear, comfortably settled in the low, wide pony phaeton which he had used occasionally during the summer, and, to his father's delight, actually holding the reins himself, with the strong, amiable, and ever-watchful Cecco seated beside him.

The drive was charming, the Point—from the top of the steep, winding, rocky road that led from the highway to the edge of its water-lapped shore—a thing of marvellous beauty, in its wealth of yet living green, of tender brown, warm yellow, and clear vivid scarlet. The Hudson flashed and sparkled like a jewel in the sun's rays, and on its broad bosom steamer and ship, yacht and fishing smack glided or skimmed or lay at anchor. It was a day that got into the blood, that lifted care and increased good-fellowship, and made a joy of mere existence. And the picnickers made royal use of their opportunities; the young people rushing to and fro in pursuit of their own devices, rolling over the dry brown grass, lying on the warm sandy beach, climbing, fishing, the more adventurous wading in the cold, clear water that rippled round the Point, while

their elders, taking equal enjoyment, sat quietly and talked, mostly reminiscent of earlier picnic days.

Then came the generous mid-day meal, the chief event on all such occasions, with tablecloth spread upon the uneven ground, and cups and saucers, glasses and plates at all sorts of unaccustomed angles, with unceremonious seating and helping, friendliness, jest, and laughter — all the accompaniments of a successful outdoor lunch. What a jolly good time every one had !

Mr. Carrington put aside his business cares, Mrs. Carrington her fears for the safety of her eldest son Ned, who was on the ocean on his way home from Europe ; uncle Archie grew positively hilarious, and even the spoiled child, Garry, forgot his grievances, and made himself fairly agreeable. But this agreeableness, alas ! did not last very long, for he and Leaycraft fell into an argument, in the middle of which, finding he was getting worsted, Garry haughtily ordered Cecco to him, and, vouchsafing no apology to the company for his abrupt departure, was therewith borne swiftly away to the woods, and out of sight.

"Don't be troubled — it's only a little way he has. He'll be happier alone," Leay assured the young guests ; and by his merry sallies

soon dispelled the uncomfortableness which his cousin's sharp remarks and sudden withdrawal had produced.

Molly was not present when this little episode occurred. She and Marty were cosily hidden away among the low rocks at the extreme end — the “jumpin’-off place,” Marty called it — of the Point, fishing with crooked pins for hooks, and for bait some stray ends of luncheon. The elders, with a goodly following of youngers, had gone for a walk through the woods, a walk too long for Marty's short legs to undertake, so Molly had coaxed the little man to go fishing with her. Elsa considered it her duty to entertain Lily Wainwright and the Parker girls. Evelyn and Viva also had social obligations, which included that walk with father and mother through the woods; and the maid who had come, and Silas, were busy collecting and washing dishes, and disposing of the remains of the feast. Clearly there was no one but Molly to look after the small brother — unless mother stayed with him, and that Molly would never have allowed. Mother and father so seldom had an outing together, she reflected; and the sweet smile of thanks and loving confidence that Mrs. Carrington gave her daughter warmed that young person's heart.

So, very willingly and cheerfully, Molly stuck

pieces of meat on crooked pins for the small boy, and cast and recast yard upon yard of thread line from the sheltered hiding-place among the rocks.

The return for the labor, not to say patience, expended was small, and by and by Marty grew dissatisfied. "No fisses here, Molly," he declared. "I 'ants to go up there." His ehubby fore-finger indicated a point at some distance away. "P'enty fisses there — eh?" He rolled to his feet and began rapidly hauling in his line, preparatory to a move.

Molly herself was not averse to a change, and the new place suggested was on the other side of the Point, a side which she had not as yet investigated. This, of course, lent it additional charm. Mr. Carrington had impressed upon the company the necessity for all being on hand at the picnic grounds at five o'clock. "I have ordered the carriages for that hour," he said. "And, allowing for the delays incidental to starting so large a party, we should leave here at five-thirty, which will give us a delightful drive in the twilight, and get us home somewhere about seven o'clock." To which all agreed.

Therefore Molly knew she must not be late — on that she was fully determined. But there was plenty of time — with a glance at the sun. "Could n't be later than half-past three," she

decided. And should they return to the picnic grounds now, mother would n't be there, and Marty might begin fretting. "Yes, Marty, we'll go see if the fishing is better over there," she said aloud. "But, remember, we can only stay for a *little* while," she enjoined upon her companion, "because father wants us to start home early. See?"

"All 'ight!" agreed Marty; and hand in hand the two began their explorations.

The distance was greater than Molly had estimated, but it was such fun scrambling over rocks, and wading through clear, shallow pools, that neither she nor Marty objected in the least. The fishing at the new place was not much better than at the old, but there were other attractions, such as large armies of tiny white crabs, swarming over the sandy beach, and no end of smooth, odd-shaped, gray, green, and pink pebbles, and, most valued of all, a remnant of a transparent, quivering jelly-fish! this last being the first of its kind that these two adventurers had ever had the opportunity of handling. Time flew by on the swiftest of wings, and at last, warned by the sun's near approach to the mountains on the opposite shore, Molly, with a heavy sigh of regret, tore herself away from the fascinating spot.

"No use making a fuss — we've *got* to go,"

she informed the reluctant Marty, who unblushingly refused to remember his promise. "Father said five o'clock; and I'm afraid it's awfully near that now. We have n't any time to spare. I guess," — Molly's eyes measured the distance which they had traversed around the Point, then turned upon a narrow footpath beginning just above them, — "I guess that's the path across the Point that Leay was talking about the other day. 'T would cut off a big piece of the distance. He said it went straight across — come on, Marty!"

Off they started, again hand in hand, and carrying newly-acquired treasure in the shape of the jelly-fish, tied up in Marty's begrimed little handkerchief, a goodly store of colored pebbles, and the crisp, perfect, sunbaked shells of three medium-sized defunct or absconded crabs. These last, for safe keeping, were carried on Molly's head — in the crown of her stiff sailor hat.

The woodland path curved in and out among the trees; fallen red and brown and yellow leaves made a pleasant, crackling carpet under the children's feet; now and then a call of "Bob White!" or of a cat-bird, broke the silence, or a bright-eyed, saucy squirrel whisked himself past them, and aroused ecstatic admiration from Marty. "Ah, Molly, do let's catch one! ah, p'ease! I 'ants one!" he coaxed.

Nothing would have suited Molly better, just then, than to stop and try to make friends with the pretty creatures, but, "No time, Marty, dear, we're late already!" she answered firmly; and the two hurried on, until a sudden wind of the path brought them face to face with Garry.

At the foot of a wide-spreading woodland giant, a thick carriage rug was spread over the dry, soft carpet of leaves, making a very comfortable couch, on which lay Garry, his back supported against the sloping tree trunk, his hands clasped behind his head, — the picture of lazy contentment. Lazy attitudes were the rule with this young gentleman, but the dreaminess now present in his eyes, the serenity of his sallow countenance, were entirely new in Molly's experience of his many moods.

"Hullo! I was wishing you'd come along," he remarked, with most unwonted geniality. "Now half close your eyes and look off there." He drew one hand from behind his head and pointed. "Can't you just imagine it's an avenue in a big haunted forest? See how the branches of those trees meet — hear them murmuring? They're enchanted! By and by a knight in armor will come riding along, on a milk-white charger, then you'll see some fun! The trees'll throw out their boughs and try to entangle the knight — gnomes and dwarfs

and little devils 'll leap on the horse beside him to drag him down. Dragons 'll stand in his way — huge, hideous scaly monsters, lashing their tails, and belching out fire and smoke from their enormous jaws. They're going to have a terrible fight, all sorts of marvellous things 'll happen — and fur fly; but, of course, the knight will come off O.K. I'm making believe he's Huldbrand — eh? And Undine is down there in the river, laughing and frisking with the other water sprites, till he comes to take her away. Eh? What? You never read the story? Well," Garry's black eyes sparkled pleasantly, "sit right down here, and I'll tell it to you," he insisted.

Marty gazed dubiously into the cool bosky depths of the woods, where the leaf-checked sunbeams were fast being supplanted by shadows, and his grip on Molly's hand tightened. Dragons, as represented in the fantastic illustrations of his book of fairy tales at home, were not of the order of beast with which he cared to become more intimate. But the temptation to Molly to stay and listen was very strong. Though accounted dull in her studies, she dearly loved a story, particularly an old-time one, of brave knights and fair ladies, of enchantments and dragons, — and well she knew Garry's graphic power as a story-teller. Her imagination quickened.

"Oh, how I should *love* to stay and listen!" she cried, her blue eyes kindling. "But Garry, it's too late. Father said we were all to meet at the picnic grounds at five o'clock, sharp, and it must be almost, if not quite, that time now. Marty and I are hurrying back, and Cecco ought to be taking you down. Where is he?" glancing around for the Italian, who was generally close beside his master.

"The ruffian was impudent to me; he's getting entirely too cheeky! — and I sent him off. I told him not to show me his ugly mug again!" calmly explained Garry. "But he'll be along for me in good season, don't you be afraid of *that*!" His tone rather implied that this would be reprehensible behavior on Cecco's part. "And you need n't be in such a headlong hurry — there's lots of time." Again Garry disturbed his position, to draw out and look at his watch. "Why, it's twenty-five minutes to five — 't won't take more than ten minutes to get to the grounds from here. We've loads of time! See for yourself." He held up the open timepiece to convince doubting Molly.

"Well, it looks later," she asserted, glancing uneasily at the shadows.

"That's because we're in here, where the trees are so high," Garry assured her. "Never

you fear, Cecco 'll be along in time: Sit down and I'll tell you the story."

Nothing loath, Molly obeyed, and with Marty's plump little figure curled up in her lap, listened eagerly to the exciting, pathetic story of Undine, which, though related in a terse boyish vernacular very unlike Fouqué's classic language, yet brought vivid pictures before Molly's willing imagination.

When this tale was finished, Molly followed it up with her favorite Arthurian legend — of pure-hearted young Galahad, in the Siege Perilous, finding his sword in the rock; going out with Joseph of Aramathye's wonderful shield; and all the other marvellous adventures that befell the young knight in his quest for the Sangreal.

Garry listened, with a most unusual and flattering interest. "But, of course, it's all rubbish, all made up," he remarked at the close of the history, the recounting of which had brought a deeper color into Molly's cheeks, added lustre to her eyes.

"Y-es!" she admitted reluctantly, with a heavy sigh; and then realized that the dead weight upon her arm meant that Marty was fast asleep. "It *must* be five! See how dark it's grown!" she cried in alarm. "Come, wake up, Marty! Wake up, dear!"

"I wonder why Cecco doesn't appear?" Garry said with vague uneasiness. Quietly, almost surreptitiously, he again glanced at his watch, — started violently, — hastily held it against his ear. "Moses in Egypt! my watch has stopped!" he cried. Bending forward, with dilating eyes, he pointed to the hands, which still stood at twenty-five minutes to five. "I don't know how long it's been so," he said briefly.

"Oh — *oh!* Then they've gone! They've gone!" screamed Molly. The next instant she was on her feet. "Keep Marty — I'll go see!" she cried, and dashed wildly down the path in the direction of the picnic grounds, which she soon reached.

But how changed was the scene! Even here, in the open, sunlight was nearly gone; the shadows were gathering fast. Of all the merry company not one person was to be seen; and the hush — the utter silence — struck a chill to Molly's heart.

"Oh, they *can't* be gone! They *have n't* left us! Mother — father — would *never* do that!" she cried incredulously; then raced madly along the gradually ascending rocky road that led from the Point, calling at the top of her voice as she went. In and out of the winding way ran Molly, until she gained the hill that

overlooked the rest of the road, to the highway — not a sign of a vehicle met her eye, nor sound of a human voice her ear. A feeling of great loneliness — of utter desolation — fell upon the little girl, and broke down her courage. “Something dreadful has happened, I know it has, or mother would never ’ve gone off and left me, even if I was late, — and *Marty* too!” she sobbed.

Then, for the sake of those two who were waiting for her in the woods, Molly dried her tears and hurriedly retraced her steps.

The something which had happened was in this wise. When the carriages arrived to convey the picnickers home, instead of two for the Parker contingency had come one — an old-fashioned roomy rockaway, with accommodations for a large number. Into this, after the gregarious habit of the youthful, had piled as many of the young people as could squeeze in. On the return from their walk of the older folk, this vehicle was half way up the road, its occupants as eager to start homeward as they had been to come to the Point, — and laughing, talking, joking. And this infringement of the regular programme had caused changes in the seating, and some confusion.

“No one should have got into any of the carriages until some older person had made sure

that all were present," Mr. Carrington had said, annoyed and uneasy.

"Oh, we 're all here!" "They 're all there!" he was assured on all sides.

"Where are Molly and Marty?" Mrs. Carrington asked anxiously of Rufus. "They are not here. See if they 're in the rockaway."

Keeping an eye on the front seats he had selected for Lily Wainwright and himself, Rufe went a few paces, made a trumpet of his hands, and shouted, "Hey, Parker! Molly and our kid in your carriage?"

Parker, who was busy settling Elsa and another girl friend in their places, turned and looked searchingly at the big carryall. There was a girl among the company wearing a sailor hat, and on her lap was a child. "Yes!" he had called back confidently. "They 're here — on the back seat. All safe!"

"That was wise of Molly, to take the close carriage, for Marty will be sure to fall asleep," thought Mrs. Carrington, little dreaming that her cherished "baby" was at that moment seated in the woods, being thrilled by weird tales of dwarfs and dragons. Mr. Leaycraft's inquiries concerning Garry had been met by a positive statement. "Oh, he's gone home long ago," one of the Parker boys volunteered from the depths of the rockaway. "I saw the Italian

go driving up the road nearly an hour ago." So the cavalcade had started, and was then — while poor Molly was shedding bitter tears of loneliness on the hill — making its way rapidly toward home in the gathering twilight, with song and jest and merry laughter, and the pleasant prospect ahead of a good dinner.

A succession of lusty shrieks from Marty brought his sister racing along the path — to find the small boy flat on the ground, kicking and squirming under the ignominy of Garry's restraining hold upon the short skirts of his blouse. The prisoner was released at Molly's approach, and flew to take refuge in her arms.

"Little beggar!" remarked Garry, wrathfully. "I've had the greatest work to keep him from rushing off and getting lost! Well, you were long enough!" he added. Then through the fast falling darkness he saw Molly's face. "Never!" he exclaimed incredulously.

"Yes, they've all gone — Cecco and all! Not a creature is down there — not a carriage to be seen! I ran to the hill to look — not a sign of anybody! They've gone — and left us here — alone!" Molly's voice broke; to cover it she coughed — tremulously — and pressed Marty's little round head against her shoulder.

"Cecco too? The brute!" remarked Garry

with fervor ; then, " What are we going to do ? " he demanded.

" Walk home," returned Molly briefly. " There is no other way," she added presently. " No one ever comes to the Point except on a picnic, so there's no hope of our getting a lift home from here. But on the road, perhaps," her tone was dubious, " we might come across a carriage or a wagon that would take us up. We ought to get out of the woods right away, and on to the main road just as quickly as possible, or there'll be no likelihood at all of our finding a wagon — people will have gone home. Now," Molly's voice grew purposely careless, " there are two plans you can choose from — you can wait here or down on the picnic grounds while I walk on, and either at home or on the road get some one to come back in a carriage and take you to Hill Top. That's one — the other plan is for you to get up and walk home yourself — or until we meet help — with me. You'll have to decide pretty quick."

There was a short silence, then Garry broke out stormily, " It's simply idiotic of you to talk of my walking to Hill Top. You know very well I could n't do it. But I'm not going to stick in *this* hole ! I'll try to scramble, somehow, down to the picnic grounds, and I'll wait there with Marty, while you go off and try to find " —

"No! no! *no!*" roared Marty, in great anguish of spirit. "No, Molly, *no!* There's things an' d'agons here! I 'ants to go wiv 'ou! I 'ants muvver!" His small plump legs twined themselves convulsively around Molly's waist, his little flannel-clad arms almost throttled her. "Oh, no! no! Molly!"

"Shut up your noise, you little 'fraid-cat!" ordered Garry, from the ground.

"So — so! sweetheart! Don't cry, Marty darling! You shall go with Molly," promised the sister, soothingly. "Mother put him in my care," she addressed Garry, firmness in her girlish accents, "and I would not be willing to go a step without him. But you are a grown boy — *you* would n't be afraid to stay here alone. And I'll hurry — I'll send or bring some one for you just as quickly as ever I can!"

Garry threw a hasty glance to right, to left — the last gleam of daylight had faded, and the soft darkness deepened, clothing familiar objects with grotesque shapes; the stillness of the woods grew oppressive. For all his scorn of Marty's fright, perhaps Garry, too, had "d'agons" and other eerie folk in his mind, for his next remarks were delivered with considerable force. "That Italian brute! I'm not going to hang around here all alone — not much! I can't walk — you *know* I can't; but *perhaps* I can manage to go

on all fours, and scramble out of these beastly woods somehow! Go ahead! but, mind you! don't you travel too fast for me to keep up with you!"

Holding Marty on one arm, no light weight, Molly stooped and extended her other hand to the boy on the ground. "I'll help you to get on your knees," she said kindly.

When this was accomplished, nor was it easy, the small procession started, and slowly, with many slips and pauses, and a running accompaniment of graphic expletives from Garry, made its way along the path, out of the woods, and on to the picnic grounds.

Here Garry fell into a great rage, storming, and abusing everybody for his present predicament, from his father and the derelict Cecco to Marty and Molly, who stood before him, companions in his misfortune.

"I shan't budge from here — I can't and what's more, I won't! And you and that spoiled youngster will have to stay too, until some one comes to find us!" he finally declared.

Then Molly, who had listened to this tirade in silence, spoke up. Setting the little brother down, close beside her, and tossing back her long hair, she drew nearer to where Garry sat upon the ground, his narrow shoulders hunched,

his soft hat pulled low over his gloomy face — a distinct picture of misery in the fast gathering darkness. "Garry," she said calmly and decidedly, "it's chilly here now; pretty soon it'll be real cold; Marty gets croup very easily, you've had rheumatic fever — this damp air off the river is the very *worst* thing for both of you. He can walk part of the way home, and I can carry him when he's tired. And when you are tired we can stop and rest — just as often as you like. But we must *not* stay in this place." Suddenly her voice grew vehement. "You're a great big boy — nearly seventeen; *I* can't carry you as I would little Marty. You are almost a man — *you* should help *me*!" Molly's voice shook.

That speech appealed strangely to Garry, and silenced the grumble on his lips. The lapping of the water on the Point suggested loneliness; the rising wind soughed softly through the trees, and blew with penetrating dampness against the boy's face. "What d' you want me to do?" he demanded sulkily.

"To get up and try to walk with Marty and me to the main road," promptly returned Molly. "Garry, you *can* walk — you walked that day on Tift Island — from the shelter to the other side. You *know* you can walk if you choose to!" The words rushed themselves into sound,

and, with beating heart, the speaker awaited another storm of invective. To her surprise and great relief it did not come.

"I'll tell you," Garry said instead, with convincing simplicity, in one of his sudden changes of mood. Pushing back his felt hat, he looked frankly up at his cousin. "I *did* walk across the island that day — I *can* walk — sometimes — when I don't happen to think of what I'm doing. But — you know I've only lately begun trying — *just* as soon as I consciously make an effort, down I go! Remember how hard it was to get me to the boat that day? Not one bit of that was put on! That's the reason I've kept dark about my attempts — I can't depend on my legs. I may n't be able to walk one step this evening."

"Oh, but you can't tell till you try!" cried Molly. "I'll hunt about and find you a stick — I saw some to-day." And off she flew with cheerful alacrity, Marty beside her, holding a tight grasp upon his sister's skirts. In a few minutes back she came bringing a stout rough staff, capable of supporting a much greater weight than any Garry would put upon it.

The boy snatched it from her. "I won't! I won't! I *won't*!" he cried out. With childish rage he beat the staff upon the ground, then raised his arm and flung it wide.

But when Molly, without a word, brought the stick back to him, Garry, in equal silence, accepted it, made a desperate effort, and struggling to his feet, stood leaning heavily upon the staff, his other hand gripping, vise-like, Molly's shoulder. "I'm ready!" he announced gruffly; and the slow march began.

To Molly's imagination that evening the narrow, winding lane from the Point soon lost all semblance of reality, becoming instead an enchanted place, the evil spirit of which kept her and her companions wandering through its mazes, with no prospect of escape. A great comfort to her was to remember Galahad's faith and courage. The steep rocky road was terribly hard on Garry's untried strength — a few dragging uncertain steps, and then had to come a halt; a halt which was more than trying to Molly, for there was always a grumble from Garry, and a protest against the next attempt. Marty trudged bravely along, his hand tight clasped in Molly's; but with each pause to rest his steps grew slower, and long before the half-way hill was reached, the plump little legs lagged unmistakably, and he pulled heavily on his sister's hand.

"Are n't we mos' home, Molly? My feets is so tired!" he complained.

"They'll be a good deal more 'tireder'

before you get through, young man," remarked Garry grimly, a certain satisfaction in his tone.

"Walk just a little farther, sweetheart," urged Molly, with a loving pressure of the child's hand.

On they went, at a snail's pace, along the seemingly never-ending way. The darkness settled, the stars came out, and the night air grew keen. At the next halt Garry turned up his collar, buttoned over his coat, and Molly, shivering in her gingham frock (her jacket was in one of the far-away carriages), knelt down to tie her handkerchief round Marty's throat. But before the ends were knotted, the small figure was drooping against her, the little round head down on her shoulder. And Marty was too overcome with sleep to be aroused—coaxing, urging, had no effect. "Poor little man! He's awfully tired! I'll take him up for a while," Molly said, and gathered the solid little figure tenderly into her arms.

"You'll never be able to carry him," cried Garry,— "and help me," he had intended to add, but as the girl staggered to her feet with her new burden, the last two words remained unspoken, and he dragged himself fiercely up by a trailing willow branch instead of accepting the shoulder Molly offered. "I'm not

going to hang on to you when you've that kid to carry," he declared brusquely.

"Oh, but you must depend on my shoulder; and I'm fully equal to both demands," she asserted stoutly. "You must take it—or how shall we ever reach the road? I'm very strong, Garry." She smiled encouragingly up at him. But, somehow, that bright, brave smile gave Garry a most uncomfortable feeling.

"Wish I had that Cecco here — *I'd* lead him a dance!" he growled; making a heroic effort, he held himself more erect, and leaned less heavily upon the willing shoulder.

Slower and slower travelled the little party. Garry's heroic effort soon spent itself; as for Molly, for all her vaunted strength, before long her shoulders and arms ached, with a numb, sickening ache. She began to dread lest her weary arms should fall apart and let Marty drop to the ground—though the warmth of his little flannel-clad body was most grateful to her. Oh, if only they could get out of this steep, unfamiliar road, where they were perpetually going in and out, in and out, and never forward; where all the shadows were grotesque and the silence so profound. If only they could reach the open road before her arms quite pulled from their sockets and Marty fell on the hard ground! Even during the halts she had to

hold the sleeping child, and each time the march was resumed it seemed to her that he grew heavier. Molly had n't dreamed that such a small boy could be so awfully heavy. The thought of home—safe, comfortable, happy—brought a lump into her throat.

On they crawled, in dull silence now,—one wrapped in slumber, the other two far too weary for speech,—when suddenly and without the least warning Garry stopped short. His staff rattled down upon the stony road, he let go Molly's shoulder, and taking some wild, random steps alone threw himself down on the dry, sandy bank at the side of the road. "There! No more walking matches for *me* to-night!" he declared with vehement determination. "You can spare your breath," as Molly uttered an exclamation. "I shan't go another step—to please you or anybody else. I'm done up! I'm *dog* tired. You understand what that means? I ache from head to foot—and this beastly rocky road has no end. My feet are heavy as tons, my legs and my back pain like"—there he finished abruptly, and stared, for Molly had turned on him.

"Do you suppose *you*'re the only one that's tired?" she cried out sharply. Then down she sat in the middle of the dusty road, dropping the slumbering Marty from her numb

arms to her lap, and burst into a passion of tears.

Garry was aghast. That romping, plucky Molly should sit there and cry, just like any other girl, gave him a shock. In the more than four months of their acquaintance not once had he seen a tear in Molly's blue eyes, though well he knew that she had often had provocation enough for that, or any other demonstration of grievous anger. Garry was astonished; more than that, he was moved in an unusual degree. A sudden and particularly disagreeable realization came to him that he had been mean to, imposed upon, this jolly, kind, little comrade. She was tired almost to death — and he was a selfish lout, he told himself fiercely, a brute and a boor! How patient she had been, and uncomplaining! A strange, hitherto-unknown sense of chivalry awoke that hour within the boy.

"Say, Molly," — he began earnestly, somewhat awkwardly.

But Molly had dashed away her tears, utterly ashamed of them, and was on her feet, staggering slightly under the weight of the sleeping child, whom she had again in her arms. "You can stay here — and rest — I'll go on with Marty," she called from the middle of the path, in a voice that, spite of all her efforts, would tremble. "And if we find a wagon — or — or

—any of the family, I'll send them right back for you." And with that she began walking away; not very fast, she was entirely too weary for that, but determinedly ignoring her cousin's call.

Then, her back being turned upon him, for the first time Garry noticed that Molly had drawn all her long, thick hair over her shoulder — over the body of the sleeping child. "To keep him warm — the lazy little beggar! And I bet she's cold in that thin gingham frock!" thought the newly observant boy on the bank. Quickly he tore open his coat, and snatched from his neck the soft, thick silk muffler that had given him comfort in the keen night breeze. "Molly! — *Molly!*" he shouted. But on went the young person he addressed.

And then the unexpected happened, for scrambling to his feet, in some sort of fashion, unassisted, Garry ran forward — unsteadily — lurching headlong from side to side of the rocky path, but making his way forward until he caught up with the weary, slow-moving figure of his cousin. "Molly," he cried out, catching hold of a fold of her skirt to steady himself, and detain her, "hold on! I say, hold on — can't you! I — I want to tell you something." Then as Molly paused, he rushed the balance of his words out, "I've been a brute to you, Molly,"

(Could she be dreaming? utterly out of her senses? wondered the amazed Molly), "but I did n't mean to be. Really, I did n't mean to impose so on you — to — be so contemptibly ugly and make you cry. And d'you suppose I'd let you go walking alone on the road after dark? Not much!" (Oh, the fine, new, protecting tone!) "Put this over your shoulders" — he poked the muffler at her. "You're cold — I know you are! Why did n't you tell me? No, I have not 'deprived' myself, as you call it, of the handkerchief. Pin it round you."

Molly *was* cold — very — and ready, generous forgiveness was one of her good qualities. Her arms still ached, but Garry's unusual kindness was comforting; so was the warmth of the muffler over her shoulders. And after a few minutes' rest the line of march was again taken up.

But help was not far away.

As the little party neared the long-sought, long-desired end of the rocky lane, a wagon came lumbering along the main road, pretty well filled with a load of what, at close view, proved to be very practical and rather dilapidated household furniture. But there was a narrow, unfilled space at the back of the low, open conveyance, and there the three young

people most gratefully bestowed themselves. The driver was a stranger to Molly; and no persuasion, no promise of liberal payment, could induce him to take the wanderers to Hill Top.

"I'll take ye part way — fur as to the cross-roads — an' drop ye there; that's all I kin do, an' I don't want no money fur it," he declared. "We've been movin' to Pleasantville to-day, this is the las' load, and my ole woman's alone in the house, waitin' supper. I mus' be gettin' hum." As far as the "cross-roads" meant a good piece off the distance to Hill Top; and as soon as the passengers were settled the wagon again took up its slow, lumbering way.

With her back against the leg of an old upturned table sat Molly, silent, Marty still asleep on her lap. Her attitude was one of utter weariness, and in the starlight her face showed very white. Garry, too, was very tired; it was several years since he had made such strenuous exertions, but that newly developed feeling of chivalry still dominated him. He had insisted upon Molly's taking the most comfortable corner of their narrow quarters; he had Marty's heavy little head upon his knee; and now he taxed himself still farther, to talk, to entertain Molly, to divert her thoughts. And as Molly sat there

listening it seemed to her that she had never known this queer boy so bright, so amusing, and — most extraordinary of all — so polite ! She wondered vaguely if the varied experiences of the afternoon and evening were a dream, this behavior was so perfectly unlike Garry ! Meanwhile the boy talked on, — of the stars, of his younger days in California, his travels in Europe, anything that came into his head, — stopping short in the middle of a stirring description of a camel ride in Egypt. “By jinks !” he cried, “I’ve just straightened it out in my brain ! This afternoon, there in the woods, — seems like a year ago ! — I told that impudent villain Cecco to clear out and never show me his ugly face again. And when he began some lingo about my ‘going down,’ as he called it, I shut him up. I said, ‘I’ll go with the others, and when I get ready to, I can take care of that and *you* can skip !’ Well, it’s just occurred to me that maybe the idiot thought I meant for him to go away, you know, off to Hill Top, and that I’d return in one of the carriages with the family. But I never had such a thought ! And so he vamoosed ! Eh ?”

“Maybe so,” answered Molly, languidly ; and as they learned afterward, this was just what Cecco had understood, and acting accordingly, he had driven himself leisurely home in his

master's pony phaeton, no doubt rejoicing in his unexpected freedom.

The wagon lumbered on; when, at a sudden turn of the road, while Garry was talking — indeed, laughing — and Molly was listening, growing more and more tired with every minute, an open carriage came dashing along, and an anxious voice rang out — “Hey! neighbor, have you seen anything of two young people on the road, and a little boy? A girl and” —

“Father!” shrieked Molly; and the next minute, with a yell of joy, in a marvellously quick fashion, Garry was out in the road.

“That *you*, Garry?” shouted Mr. Carrington, incredulously, to the tall boy standing upright by the cart.

Then followed a short period of confusion — Rufus and Leay crowding to the wagon — another carriage full of dear familiar people arriving on the scene — more voices — joyful — scolding — teasing. “We’ve been all over the Point since we missed you” — “Hunting in the woods” — “You took the old way — the longest, instead of the short cut, that’s how we missed you, until now!” “Mother — awfully — frightened!”

Eager, loving hands lifted Molly out and set her on her feet; her knees felt queer; the voices were jumbling confusedly in her ears — the

carriage lamps danced before her eyes. She would give Marty up to no one but her father. "Mother — left him in — my care; I've tried" — she said breathlessly. Her throat seemed to close; the confusion of voices faded away — the carriage lamps went up to the very skies — then down — down —

"Catch her!" roared Garry. Loosing his hold on the wagon, he plunged forward, before Leay — before Rufus — and snatched at the slender swaying figure, to land with it flat upon the ground, — for plucky Molly had reached the end of her endurance, and fainted.

Ten days later, when Molly was quite her own bright self again, and Garry had grown a little more proficient in what Leaycraft designated as his "self-conducted locomotion," and when the adventures of that never-to-be-forgotten afternoon and evening had been related and discussed times without number — at the end of that time Mr. Leaycraft and Garry bade good-by to Hill Top and departed for California. The amiable Cecco accompanied them, in full health, despite Garry's dire threats, and with lighter duties to fulfil, now that Garry had found his legs. That young gentleman made a confession before he left.

"I said I'd be delighted to get away from

you people. Well, I'm not," he confided to Molly, in the hour of parting. "I guess I'm going to miss you all terribly, though," with all his old imperiousness, "you need n't let those boys know I said so," and, as Molly related to her mother afterward, there was actually a tear in Garry's eye. "Maybe you'll hear something one of these days, if you live long enough," he added mysteriously, and refused to say more.

As it happened, Molly did live long enough, and the explanation of the mystery came in the spring, in a letter to Mrs. Carrington from her brother.

"Garry has improved wonderfully," wrote Mr. Leaycraft. "Of course, he is not yet robust, — he may never be, — but he walks now almost as well as any one, and rides out on horseback every day. Cecco's position is becoming a sinecure. Besides this, my boy has been studying up, and in June he intends to go to the University for matriculation. Be sure to tell Molly of this, Letty, for, from what Garry lets out in conversation now and then, I judge that the influence of that dear young daughter of yours has been of great benefit to my boy. I know she is not considered one of your clever children, but, my dear, she has a very admirable quality — Garry calls it 'pluck'!"

